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THE MASTER

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IRVING BACHELLER

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Darrel of the Blessed Isles

Virgilius

Silas Strong

The Hand-made Gentleman

THE MASTER

BEING IN PART
COPIED FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL FOR NOVELISTS
A ROUND TABLE OF GOOD FELLOWS WHO, LONG
SINCE, DINED EVERY SATURDAY AT THE SIGN
O' THE LANTHORNE, ON GOLDEN
HILL, IN NEW YORK CITY

By

IRVING BACHELLER

New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1909

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TO MY FIRST EMPLOYER AND GOOD FRIEND

Louis Klopsch

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FOREWORD

I WAS talking one day with my friend, Mr. Willis Brooks Hawkins, of the many careless nights we had known together at the old Lanthorne Club, which held its sessions in a very odd and ancient house on Monkey Hill, and later in the old tavern farther south, where once the redoubtable Captain Kidd loved to light his pipe and drink his grog and coffee. We spoke of the boys and men who had sat with us at meat before its ample fireside — of Crane, Field, Masson, Nye, Tarkington, Garland, Gaines, Gilder, Howells, Stedman and Stoddard, some of whom were then beginning their work. As our talk went on I told of my plan for this tale, and particularly of a quarrelsome old sea "Cap'n" who had pushed into my study at odd times and bullied me, busy as I had been with better people, into hearing him. I told how his rough fist had whacked my best mahogany in the midst of unwelcome tales and opinions; how once he had broken into my task with a ribald song and boldly winked at me when I turned to protest, and begun to fight the wind, as one may say, in a long talk about "lady cooks"; how at

last I had thrust him into my plot and slain the wretch to get rid of him. I did not fail to speak of my suspicions that he might have been a deep one, the ghost of Kidd—or some one of his other relatives—sent by the gods themselves to destroy me for the public good.

We weighed these possibilities and wrangled over my plan quite in the fashion that prevailed at the old Sign of the Lanthorne. The Brotherhood of the Toilers' Chain was born of our talk, and I am indebted to my good friend for information as to Condon and his methods.

The few who may have read my first and least-known tale, "The Master of Silence," will recognize herein one of its incidents and a trait of its leading character.

I have dared to hope that the reader would find amusement and something better in these singular adventures and observations of "The Pippin."

IRVING BACHELLER.

Robinwood, July 30, 1909.

THE MASTER

THE MASTER

CHAPTER I

I HAVE written half a hundred tales, but none so strange as this one that I have been living for the past twenty years. So many have sat with me through half a night by the fireside and heard me tell of Rog Rone and Ben Lovel and the *Susq* and the big round table at the Sign of the Lanthorne and begged for more when I rose and bade them good night that now here I am, at last, with pen in hand beginning my story. Hereafter I shall see less of the midnight hour and save my lungs and send them to the book at bedtime if they want more of me. I have some hope, too, that the truth as I shall set it down may restore a lost and loved companion of my youth if that be possible.

I was born in Bedford Square, London, in 1859. We lived handsomely, my father being in the Government service and fairly well-to-do, and I spent my boyhood in a boarding school.

My father died when I was fifteen, leaving his fortune in the possession of my stepmother and a guardian. I had been a pet and was now a problem and on my way to worse distinction, as I thought. Because I had been guilty of a little prank or two at school they pushed me into the world to earn my living with an allowance of forty pounds a year.

So it happened that soon after my bereavement I went to Liverpool to learn the plumber's trade. Now of all trades that was least to my liking, and yet if I had not been a plumber my story could never have made itself and I — well, I should have gone down into the dungeons of the deep sea long ago, most likely.

So there I was in Liverpool for a matter of five years making the best of it, and a fairly good plumber, for one of delicate breeding, and the foundations of my history as well.

I had rather humble lodgings in the outskirts of the city. Being slow to make friends I grew to love the solitude of my attic chamber where people out of history and the story-books kept my heart up and in good company.

One night I lay in bed, hearing the rain as it beat over the roofs and against the window-

panes when, suddenly, there came a rap at my door.

"Who's there?" I demanded, starting out of bed.

As I got no answer I repeated my call and stood a moment listening. I could hear nothing, however, but the wind and the rain. Having lighted a candle I dressed myself with all haste and opened the door, beyond which I could discern the figure of an old man in the hallway. Was he a straggler who had got in at the street door? I asked myself; and listened for the familiar voice of importunity. The old man approached me, and my wonder grew, for he was not a mendicant, as I had guessed, but an old gentleman in stock and collar and a suit of broadcloth, cut in the fashion of my grandfather's time. His hair was white, his face pale, his clothes dripping. He put his finger on his lips and shook his head. I liked not his silence, at such an hour of the night, and drew back involuntarily a step or two, although my pity should have drawn me toward him.

"Sit down," I said, "and tell me what I can do for you."

Still he made no reply, but sank into the chair I offered and felt in his pocket and

withdrew a leathern wallet. He opened it and found a letter which he presented to me. It was directed to my father, Kendric Holm, Esq., at the street and number in London where he had lived for half a century. The address had been crossed and my own added in the familiar handwriting of our old butler: "22 Kirkland Street, Liverpool, top floor."

It all seemed very strange to me, for my father had been six years in his grave. The old gentleman smiled and nodded as I examined the superscription. He took a small slate from his pocket and wrote hastily:

"Are you his son?"

I nodded and said, "Yes."

Then he wrote the words, "Open and read the letter." So I broke its seal and there was my call into the long thoroughfare of my life story. It bore the date of March 5, 1879, and no indication of the place whence it came:

DEAR BROTHER:

> I need your help. Come to me at once. Consequences of moment to me, to you and to all men depend upon your coming promptly. Let nothing stand in your way. You shall be well repaid for any

sacrifice of time or money that my wish involves. The bearer who leaves to-day on his way down to the sea will bring you here. He is provided with funds. Follow him and bring no one with you and come as soon as you can. If, perchance, you be ill or dead, even, this letter is for your son whom I shall welcome as I would welcome you.

From your loving brother,

DAVID HOLM.

I had often heard my father speak of his brother David—now my nearest relative—who had gone to America long before I was born. We had had no news of him since I was a little lad, just out of the nursery. In a package of old letters, which my father had given to me, were two from this brother of his, and I remembered their postmark and their brevity and the antique quality of their script. He was a doctor in Detroit when those letters were written. Here was the odd and unmistakable handwriting with which I had been long familiar.

Singular as the message was, the messenger was more so. I soon discovered that he could neither hear nor speak, and that he wished to

know my answer. I brought some dry clothes from my wardrobe, but he would not touch them until I had written these words for him on the slate:

"I will go with you."

His face glowed with pleasure as he took my hand. Then he looked about him and shook his head and wrote:

"You shall have a better home. He is rich and some day you may be his heir."

He took a hundred-pound note from his pocket and gave it to me.

"Go to-morrow, and get passage on first steamer," he wrote.

I invited him to sleep in my bed, and he answered that he was ill and would be glad to rest until morning.

He would stop, now and then, as he was getting ready for bed and put his hand to his side and shake his head ruefully. He lay in bed at last, and I was about to go for a doctor, when he beckoned to me, and then this dialogue, with the aid of slate and pencil:

"Don't leave me," he wrote, and I thought it an odd request.

"When did you reach England?" was my query.

"March 19th, by the *Northland*," he wrote.

Soon he added: "Started from the inn before dark and missed my way."

By and by he put the slate under his pillow and closed his eyes, and when I saw him resting quietly I lowered the lamplight and lay down upon a sofa and fell asleep. A strange cry awoke me. The sun was shining and the room very still. I rose and found the stranger lying dead where I had left him when I went to my couch soon after midnight. The slate and pencil were in his hands and the former bore this unfinished message:

"Our home is at Lac——"

Death had cut him off in the midst of it, for the last letters showed the weakening of his hand, and sprawled to the edge of the slate, and I could scarcely read them.

So it was that my mystery and my quest began.

CHAPTER II

I HAD taken quarters at the Silver Mug, in New York, an odd little inn with trees and shaded tables on either side of a walk that led to its front door. There people sat long over their food and wine, of a summer evening, and forgot the day. Many strange and curious people made their home at the Mug — actors, musicians, artists, and a certain poet who borrowed eighty dollars from me, with which to produce a tragedy, and nearly succeeded, for the sum had touched the bottom of my purse. There my days were enlivened by the Mug's talent labouring with its technique on the xylophone, the cornet or the banjo, and my nights by roistering homecomers after the play.

I had been permitted to keep the hundred pounds which the messenger of my uncle had given to me, and that sum and I had begun our adventures. I had found it a feeble and failing partner, and one summer evening when I sat rather hopeless in the garden of the Silver Mug, eating my dinner, a small,

grizzly, serious-looking man, with a stiff leg and a weather-beaten face of many scars and wrinkles, limped along the garden walk, his cane clanking on the stone flags, and sat down at my table. He had a nose which invited thoughtful contemplation and suggested thrilling incidents. It had been broken in the middle and twisted to one side and turned up at the end. I observed, also, that the skin of his hands was rough and hairy. He looked about the place with the air of a dog fancier surveying a litter of pups and with no high opinion of them. His small gray eyes, that were deep-set, under a line of grizzled fur that crossed the base of his forehead, settled on a waiter who stood some feet away. He summoned him by tapping on the floor with his cane, and demanded to know, first, in a domineering fashion, if he were to be kept waiting all day, and next if he could have scallops and bacon.

The waiter consulted the bill and nodded, and the newcomer went on with a playful wink of his eye:

"Steer 'em up alongside, sonny, with some taters an' a bottle o' gin."

He looked across at me and winked one eye again, and I could scarcely keep my

countenance on account of his odd behaviour. While he sat waiting he smacked his lips and ground his teeth together, and picked up a table-knife and felt its edge with his thumb.

Soon a woman passed us. His eyes followed her, and he gave a low whistle and leaned toward me and whispered confidentially: "Neat rigged an' tidy!"

I made no answer but turned to the old sea dog — for such I took him to be — a bit angry at his rudeness.

"Wal, what's the matter o' you, my pippin?" he asked in a pouncing manner.

"'My pippin!'" I exclaimed with resentment. "Pardon me, sir, but you will please excuse me from being your 'pippin.'"

He had addressed me and the waiter as if we had been the veriest slaves in his household.

"I mean it friendly," he answered, with a stern glance and a wink of challenge. He speared a pickle with a quick jab of his fork and added: "Don't git on the high ropes. Leave the cap'n alone. He's been to sea an' ain't seen a lady fer three year an' when they swish by they tech his feelinks, an' he speaks 'em — that's what he does. Hell's bells! If I had steam in me an' a whistle on the smoke-stack I'd give a toot ev'ry

time I seen a lady go by — so I would an' no wonder."

I began to regard him with increasing sympathy and respect. It was only a rough sort of sea courtesy which had provoked my anger, and I was appeased.

"Once in a while they fling a harpoon right into my vitals and give a yank on the line," he added with a slow wink. "An' I've had 'em tow me hellwards out o' my course, matey, 'fore I cut loose an' let 'em go."

He whetted his knife on the edge of his plate for half a moment and added: "I like the looks on 'em an' the sound on 'em when they go by — some kind o' proud an' purty — like a schooner in new sails, an' I've had 'em git mad an' smash me in the eye, an' do ye think I hits 'em back? No! not Cap'n Rog o' the *Susq*, says I — not never, an' that's the truth. He'll take anythink f'm a lady."

He broke off a piece of bread and stuffed his mouth and went on with a bulge in his left cheek. "They bring the man out of a lad. As soon as we come ashore an' git a look at 'em we begin t' step high. Look a' that ring."

He showed me a cheap seal ring on the little finger of his left hand.

"Two dollars!" he whispered with a wink; "but I'll make it pay me ten to one — you mind what I say."

He gave me a short talk on the fair "sect" and its liking for "nicknacks" and, having eaten his dinner, touched his stiff knee, and said with a look and a tone that seemed to complain of his ill luck: "'Ain't what I used to be since I got a sny in my leg."

He spoke the words, "sny in my leg," with squinting eyes and the same tone of complaint as before. I took it to mean a slight but permanent bend.

Soon he lifted the stiff leg to the seat of a chair beside him, scratched a match on his rough palm and covered its blaze with his knotty fingers, as if he were out in the wind, and lighted a stogy. Then he puffed thoughtfully a moment and resumed his reflections on the peculiar powers and capacities of women.

"There's no time that a man'll fight like when a lady stan's by an' puts in a word good an' frequent," he began.

That started him on a thrilling tale about "a one-eyed lady," who had been cook of the *Susq* and who had assisted him in a battle with mutineers. This energetic and cyclo-

pean lady held me when I had been about to leave the table, and really assisted fate as well as the Captain, for although I should have been thinking of better things he soon had me by the ears, so to speak, and my heart beating like a trip-hammer. He owned a big schooner called the *Susquehanna*, and had just arrived from Mexico, so he told me, with a load of pelts. His name was Roger Rone and he explained:

"Some calls me Rog Rone (he gave the g its hard sound), an' some calls me Cap'n Rog, an' you can call me anythink if ye say it friendly."

Born on the Bowery nearly sixty years before, of an Yankee mother and an English father, both of sea-faring stock, as he told me, Rone had run away in his boyhood and shipped before the mast.

We sat together until the evening had passed and he told me tales of the sea and smote the table with a clenched fist, and winked an eye sternly when he came to his fights and quarrels, and often shook his rough knuckles under my nose, and once threatened me with his bottle, to show me how he had laid about him with a broadsword. I thought of leaving two or three times, but soon we had

the place to ourselves, and I must confess that his adventures were like a wonderful story-book.

The talented guests of the Mug had begun to return from concert hall and theatre when he invited me to his lodgings to spend "the sweet o' the night," and added by way of argument:

"It ain't often that I takes a fancy to any person like I done to you. I'll show ye some little trinkets, as I calls 'em, which are real particular fine an' no mistake, Cappy."

I wanted to know more of this singular man and so accepted his invitation.

We left the Mug and he clanked along beside me with his heavy cane at a pace that made me hurry. In this manner and with scarcely a word passing between us we walked to Bleecker Street and, turning westward, continued our tramp for a matter of five or six minutes. Soon my leader opened an iron gate and I followed up the steps of a dingy brick dwelling. I could see a dim light on the painted window-panes of the first floor above the basement, and the links of a chain, cut gracefully in the paint that covered the glass, shone like gold as they let out the light within.

The Cap'n thrust a key into the door and we entered as it swung open. A gas-jet lighted the hall within, the bare floor of which was creaky and worn with much coming and going. Its walls had once been covered with blue paper, now dirt-stained and partly stripped away. Through a sliding door, half open, I could see a number of men playing cards at a big round table — rough-faced, big-handed men, plainly clad, who peered through the door at us. Instantly the thought came to me that I had done a foolish thing, coming to such a place alone with a stranger, for this part of Bleecker Street was none too respectable, as I knew. But after all it was probably some lodge or club of working men who were now engaged in harmless recreation, I thought. The Cap'n reassured me by saying:

"Take a look at the club room, Cappy. It's a snug place and no mistake."

We stood in its half-open door and surveyed the room. It was furnished like the best room in a cheap tenement — tawdry colours in plush upholstery and carpet. A stack of camp chairs in the corner, suggested a place of assembly. A plain kitchen table covered with trades union and socialistic books and

papers stood near the door. A portrait caught my eye and held it until we left the room — a man's head and shoulders with a wonderful strength and repose in them. The expression of the head and body, and especially that of the strong brave eyes, was lion-like and impressive.

"Jack Condon," said the Cap'n as I raised my finger. "Some calls him the Devil, an' no wonder."

"And what is your club?"

"The Tilers," he answered, as he limped into the hall ahead of me, and up a creaking stairway.

At the top of the last flight and rather close under the roof he unlocked a door and entered a dark room while I waited on the landing. As he turned the key a loud chattering and a burst of maudlin, careless laughter rose within. An odour, like that of a monkey house, came from the open doorway. My companion was crossing the dark room when I heard him trip and fall clattering on the floor. He rose with a loud oath and struck a match and lighted a gas-jet. I entered and saw a large attic room which extended from the front to the rear walls of the building. The Cap'n felt his lame leg and limped sorely to the side of an

old lounge and threw down his hat. A great green parrot chained to a pole at the farther end of the room laughed uproariously. The Cap'n raised his cane, and as he struck the air with it, a blade some eight inches long darted from its ferrule and clicked into a socket. He poised the stout stick in his right hand and gave it a fling above his shoulder, reeling a little on his sound leg with arms extended as the weapon left his hand. It flew straight at the bird's breast and cut through its body. The Cap'n limped across the room and deliberately drew the knife from its wound and finished the bird with a blow.

"Ye will laugh at the Cap'n – will ye?" he muttered. "Ye're all tryin' to walk on the Cap'n, so ye are, the hull bunch o' ye."

He took an old, rusty broadsword from a little table and approached a small sheet-iron stove that stood a few feet away from the doorway.

"Ye just reached out with this 'ere leg o' yours to ketch the foot o' the Cap'n, so ye did," he declared, as he fetched the stove a whack that made it reel half about and settle down with a kind of shudder. Another blow and the pipe came apart and a length of the same with the stove tumbled noisily on the

floor. Then the Cap'n continued his talk, emphasizing his words now and then with a blow of the broadsword: "You says to yerself the Cap'n 'll be back by an' by an' if he don't think to strike a match as soon as ever he opens the door, you says, I'll lay here in the dark an' stick out my leg an' trip him. You thinks an' you says he can't never do nothink to me, the Cap'n can't. I'm iron an' I'll just give him one — that's what I'll do. An' ye done it spiteful — ye did — an' now the Cap'n has got his say. Hell's bells! you're a tidy bit of a stove, you are. Now you've learnt suthink 'bout the Cap'n an' I wouldn't wonder."

The stove lay dented and crumpled into utter shapelessness.

The Cap'n threw down his sword and lifted the crumpled stove in his arms and lugged it across the room and balanced it on the sill of an open window and kicked it into the darkness beyond. The stove fell crashing on a fence in the back yard and bounded to the earth.

A gruff voice shouted from the hall below, "Aw - what's - de - matter - wid - ye?" and the query was swiftly put as if it were all one word.

The Cap'n limped to the mantel shelf and stood silently filling his pipe.

"I won't be picked on by no stove whatever," he explained when the smoke was coming. "I never done nothink to that stove but black its boots and buy coal for it. I s'pose it didn't know no better. Hell's bells! but I'm fond of a row, shipmate. It must look like I'm crazy, but I can't help it. I have to fight with suthink every day an' that's the God's truth. I hain't like nobody you ever seen afore. I'd fight a hole in the ground if it didn't treat me proper an' ev'ry day in the year I fight the gov'ment."

"What government?" I asked.

"Ev'ry gov'ment," he answered with a wink. "They're all rotten. They've got their feet on the neck o' the poor man, Cappy—the world over an' no mistake. I'm for the under dog."

"I don't believe I'd like to fight with you," I said. "You certainly know how to use the sword-cane."

He opened a closet door and hauled out a kind of scarecrow figure — made by stuffing an old suit with straw — and stood it up in a corner. Then he stepped back as far as possible and asked where I would have him plant his knife.

"Aim at the heart," I said.

Again he poised the weapon and again it sped like an arrow as he flung and balanced on his good leg and his blade pierced the left breast of the lay figure. He continued to throw this deadly knife at the stuffed suit until the coat of the latter was cut to rags.

"Left leg, plum on the knee, Cap'n," he would shout as he flung his weapon. "Through the hold, Cap'n," "Abaft the neck, ol' friendy," and so he went on with surprising energy and unerring aim.

He seemed to be vain of his skill and sat down beside me with a wink and began filling his pipe again. A monkey crept from under the lounge where he had been hiding.

"Ho there, shipmate," said the Cap'n, "you slipped below till the storm was over — so ye done. Hell's bells! I'm glad ye lived through it."

The monkey approached him rather timidly and seeing no threat in his face or hand soon climbed to his knee.

"Picked up all kinds o' trinkets in my travel," said the Cap'n, as he lifted from his mantel a small wooden box about four inches long by three in width, one side of which was covered with close-set bars of fine wire.

Evidently it was the home of some tiny prisoner.

"Now ye never seen the like o' that, I dare presume to say," remarked the Cap'n as he lighted a candle and held it close to the wire bars. Its light showed me a great, hairy tarantula scurrying about the sand-covered bottom of the box.

He inserted a small stick and challenged this dreadful pet of his, which immediately rose on its hind legs in a threatening attitude and uncovered its fangs.

"Say, cappy," said my companion, "if ye had an enemy an' ye could spare 'im as well as not an' was to let this old boy loose in his bedroom there'd be trouble, an' I wouldn't wonder."

The Cap'n looked into my face and winked knowingly. Then he showed me a box of scorpions and gave me some account of their habits and particularly of their way of stinging.

In the midst of this he was interrupted by a loud rap. He quickly put away his pets and limped to the door and opened it.

"Why — why — up — upon my soul an' body it's — it's the shoemaker," he stammered, as if surprised and embarrassed in no small degree by the man who confronted him.

There in the open door stood as handsome a youth as ever I looked upon. His large, blue eyes were clear as a cloudless noonday; his wavy light hair was parted neatly over a broad forehead; his skin was weathered brown, his nose and mouth finely modelled. He was, I judged, some two or three years younger than I.

He strode into the room without a word to the Cap'n and took my hand.

"This is Mr. Holm," he said, "and I—I am Ben Lovel."

"I do not remember to have met you," I said.

"No, but I have seen you often and could not help knowing your name."

"It is very late and I think that I must go," I said rising.

The newcomer passed a note to Cap'n Rone and turned to me and said:

"If you will let me I will walk to your inn with you."

I gladly accepted his offer and the Cap'n limped to the door with us where we bade him good night.

An old man with long, white beard and hair stood waiting near the foot of the steps.

"This is my old master, Horton," said

the youth as we three set out together. "I saw you coming here with Cap'n Rog. I thought it rather strange and followed you."

The words puzzled me and I thought a moment and said, because I knew not what else to say:

"Yes?"

"Yes; I was troubled and some day you shall know why."

It was clear that he knew more of the Cap'n than he cared to tell, and wished to give me a word of warning.

"You do not know The Toilers?"

"No."

"Why not join the order?"

"Is it a good thing?"

"No, and that's why I'm a member and why you should be."

We walked in silence for a moment or more and then he whispered:

"Speak not of all this that I have said, and come and see me."

He put a card in my hand and as we were now at the gate of the Silver Mug I bade them good night.

CHAPTER III

IN THINKING of what I should do, now that my money was nearly spent, I had thought more than once of trying to write for the newspapers. I had written sketches of some length in a sort of diary, in which my observations had been recorded, and some little conceit had begun to grow in me. I set down in this book, for I had nothing else to do, a long account of the Cap'n and of his adventures on land and sea and of his lodgings. The next time I saw Rone in the Mug I took him to my room and sat him down and read aloud the sketch that I had written. He was greatly pleased and flattered me by saying that "it read like print," and suggested that like as not it would bring me good money. I thought and still think that I had done fairly well for one of my practice and so, having the Cap'n's leave, I copied my sketch and took it to the editor of the *Sun*.

He read it while I sat just beyond the first line of defence against besieging talent in the city room. He sent for me, by and by, and

I was led safely past the low wooden barrier in among the seats of the mighty, as I regarded them. Then a few words from the great man, a scratch or two of his pencil, and presto! my plan of life had changed. It was a three-sided compliment that he gave me, being composed of a word of praise, a request for more copy, and an order on the cashier. Here was a mine of treasure beyond the cashier's window and I would dig into it and save myself from destitution, if possible, for I had begun to feel like the Dutchman who neglected his cabbages to look for hidden gold.

I got along fairly well. Soon there were some who called me a "star" but alas! it was a faint twinkle if any that I had in me. I was all too capable, however, and soon won my way into the Impossible Club. There were five graceless good fellows in the Club.

We dined together every Saturday in some cozy place and discussed the last play or the latest novel and a night came when one of the party read a poem of his own manufacture. At our next meeting another retaliated with a short tale and that lead to graver crimes.

One day I went to see the shoemaker whom I had met at the Cap'n's lodgings, a pleasure which my busy life had denied me for some

weeks. I found him in an odd corner of the city called Kerrigan Place. His shop was above a hanging stair on the front of an old brick building with an ironmongery in its basement. He sat at his bench mending a pair of shoes and greeted me warmly.

"I've heard of your success," he said. "Darklight has told me and he has promised to take me to dine with your little club some evening."

"You will have a hearty welcome," I said.

"I like to hear about books and the men who make them. Have you read the new book of which the papers have said so much? Its title is "Brothers?"

"No, but we were speaking of that book at our last dinner. Most of the boys have read it."

"And do they like it?"

"They speak of it with a kind of reverence, as if it were one of the few inspired books, and of the mystery of its authorship as if it were like that of the tablets of stone."

The shoemaker smiled.

"It is no mystery to me," he said. "I know the author."

"I wish that I knew him."

"And you shall," he answered as he worked.

"If you tell your readers that it is a certain great man of the name of John Condon you will please him and do no injustice. There is no longer any reason for concealment."

"It's an important bit of news," I said, "a feature for the first page under a spread head. Tell me of this great man."

"My friend, let us save words," said the shoemaker. "I will take you to see him and you shall make your own opinions and then I shall have something to say."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Our club meets to-night," I said.

"You can go to the club, for we cannot see my master until midnight."

"And if you will dine with us we can leave the club in good time." I urged.

"I cannot dine with you," he answered, "but if you will call for me at nine I will go with you to meet your friends."

I left the shoemaker, having agreed to call for him at nine, and as I reached the pavement a quaint inn, with an old lantern hanging over its steps, caught my eye. It was opposite the little shop in one of the oddest nooks of the old city. I entered for a bite of luncheon and so discovered the future home of our club.

That evening we met at the "Hole in the Wall" — a cozy place of refreshment back of Temple Court where I spoke of my discovery and we set out for the Lanthorne in Kerrigan Place. The night had fallen dark and misty and we tramped through silent and deserted streets in the lower part of the town and, by and by, had filed into the narrow entrance of Kerrigan Place. It was not half a block long and the brick walls on either side of it came together in a curve at the end. Our footsteps filled the little street with echoes.

We halted, suddenly, under the lantern sign before a low, wide window of small panes beyond which we could see the shine of glasses and the flicker of an open wood fire. "The Lanthorne" was the name painted on a panel of its door.

It was a kind of half-way house between old times and the present, and its ancient, Dutch door opened on a merry world. That door had been built for men who had big stomachs and nothing to do but fill them, and heads not too far above their business, so that the tallest of us had to pay a toll of reverence on its threshold. A stout and cheery-faced man in a white apron came from behind

the little bar as we entered and gave us a hearty welcome.

"This way, gentlemen," said he, as he led us through the café, in which a dozen people or so had got to their cognac and tobacco, into a small private room where a table was spread for six. And how well spread! — gold-wrought glasses by every plate and in the centre a great vase of flowers and platters of snowy celery! We chortled and exchanged glances.

"Is this a cocktail that I see before me?" said Pipps tragically. "Come, let me clutch thee."

"Or is it but a cocktail of the mind? — a false creation proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?" Lengthy Higgins added, as he raised his glass.

We all looked into his face, distinguished by its sadness, its large, round spectacles and its full beard, and laughed, for no one ever looked at him without laughing.

"Alas! I fear it will cost much gold," said James Darklight known as "Jimmy." "Some of you will have to stake me."

In came a waiter with blue points and another with old sherry.

"Some of us can write like angels and some

of us want to," said the ever hopeful Darklight, by way of continuing the talk which had been interrupted by our entrance. "We'd like to break into literature ——"

"With a Darklight and a Jimmy I should think we might succeed," Pipps interrupted.

"They do treat one as if he were a burglar — those satraps that edit the magazines," Jimmy went on. "You'd think they were appointed by heaven to guard the house of letters. When I try to cross its threshold their eyes are like revolvers aimed at my head."

"It is quite just; in literature every one is supposed to be a fool until he has proved himself innocent," said Pipps with a smiling face. "You are still under suspicion."

"I suggest," said Darklight, "that we put each other on trial and learn who is guilty and who is not. I propose a club — a joyous kind of club — for that purpose. We ought to study this old town of ours. It's a wonderful museum of character and colour and deviltry and absurd splendour. Let's have a room like this and a dinner every Saturday. Two of us shall write tales or poems and read them at the dinner. The rest shall find as much fault as possible, and we must all promise to take it in good part."

"And our praise would grow like weeds and our heads like cabbages," said the cynical Mr. Pipps.

"No; we'll prohibit praise," Jimmy answered. "It's criticism we want. We must all agree to speak our minds and give and take, and promise to be happy. Let the only praise be silence."

"But no poems!" said Pipps. "I'd rather you'd draw a revolver on me than a poem. Anyhow, let's insist that poems be carried openly — in the belt, as it were — so that those who read may run."

Darklight, in no way discouraged, went on: "We could bring curious people to the feast and get them to talk to us — tramps, thieves, fakirs, Bowery boys, and we could even descend to authors, statesmen, and millionaires. We could try to draw them out and discover new motives and points of view."

"The school for novelists," said Colonel Christmas of a light spirit and a heavy body, called by courtesy "Colonel Christmas." He was the religious editor of a great journal.

The club was planned and in half an hour it was duly organized.

"I know a singular character here in Kerrigan Place," I suggested. "We might begin

upon him and see if we can digest the fellow. He's the most wonderful man I ever saw."

"Who is he?" Pipps inquired.

"A shoemaker."

"A shoemaker!"

"It's Ben Lovel and I know him," said Darklight. "He's a musician and a poet, and a philosopher and a gentleman. He's a poor devil that works for a living ——"

"Works!" said Pipps, "a man of his attainments ought to know better than that."

"He knows more than all of us put together," said Darklight, as he cast a frown up and down the table. "We're babies; I tell you, we're not in his class. He's a man."

"Steer him up to us," said Pipps; "I've seen so many poets I'd be glad to look at a man."

"I am to bring him here at nine o'clock," I announced.

"Let me go after him now," Darklight proposed and I waived my privilege and he left us.

Terrapin was being served and champagne was flowing into long-stemmed, brilliant goblets, when we all came to, as it were.

"Something is wrong," said Pipps. "This isn't possible."

"I believe we're all dreaming," said Lengthy Higgins with a laugh.

"Send for the proprietor," I suggested.

Our host entered in half a moment.

"I think you must have made a mistake," said Pipps, looking up at him. "We didn't order a spread like this and it can't be your regular *table d'hôte*."

"Are you not gentlemen of the press — are you not the friends of Mr. Horton?" our host inquired.

"We are gentlemen of the press, but, alas! we are not friends of Mr. Horton," said Pipps with a look of amazement.

Then said our host: "It's very strange. Mr. Horton ordered the dinner and paid for it and his friends were to be here at seven, and they have not come at all. I thought you were the men."

"Heavenly manna!" exclaimed Mr. Pipps, looking from one to another.

"Well, gentlemen, I have my pay and you might as well have the dinner," said our host.

We settled in our chairs again with a sense of peace and comfort which I have rarely known.

Suddenly Darklight returned with Ben Lovel. The latter shook hands with each of

us and took the chair offered him without a word. I observed his face more carefully than before. It had a modest, gentle look in it, although it was the face of a man who knew the world. Pipps remarked to me, some days later, that Lovel looked like one who had stepped out of an old oil painting, and therein he repeated my own thought. Well, we were all his friends before the night was an hour older, and had voted him into the club. He had said little, but, somehow, we knew that he was a good fellow and that he had something for us. I sat beside him at the table and asked about his life.

"I make shoes," he answered simply.

"Do you ever write?" was my query.

"Yes; but I think I can do better making shoes."

I asked about his history, but he gently turned me aside as if it were a thing scarcely worthy of his thought or mine.

Our host had entered the room with a tall, heavy gentleman in full dress, who carried a cape-coat on his arm. The large head of the stranger was adorned with iron-gray hair, closely trimmed moustache of the same colour and a handsome, merry face. He laughed as he looked down at us and said:

"I am Israel Horton, gentlemen. May I know whom I have the honour of entertaining?"

Colonel Christmas, being the oldest member of our party, rose and introduced himself and each of us in turn. We knew all about Mr. Horton, although few of us had ever seen him. He had come to New York from the Middle West long before and was said to be one of the richest men in the world. Certain newspapers had called him "the railroad king."

"Our friend here made a little mistake," he said, turning to the landlord. "My other guests were to be here at eleven and not at seven o'clock. If you're happy no harm is done. There's another private room and plenty to eat and drink."

"And we're in great luck," said Colonel Christmas. "We've had squabs and canvasbacks, and here comes Mr. Horton, the rarest bird of all. Sir, we propose your health."

We rose and drank to the millionaire, who bowed and laughed and tossed his cape-coat to the landlord.

"How did you learn that I was a bird?" he asked. "I didn't suppose it was generally known."

"Sir, no man could make your speed without wings," the Colonel suggested.

"Well, so long as you don't roast me I'm with you, as the turkey said to the farmer," he remarked and sat down at the table. "You seem to know about me — tell me about yourselves."

"We're a bunch of good fellows who write for a living," the Colonel went on. "If you should desire a modest loan, sir — say fifty cents or so — you could get it from any one of us, without security, as soon as he could borrow the sum. We tap the springs of romance and the sacred fount of song. Epics, lyrics, novels, plays, promptly and neatly executed. Sonnets made while you wait, and tragedies done to order. We dine together Saturday nights."

"Well, invite me to one of your dinners and I'll call it square," said Mr. Horton.

"Sir, we invite you for next Saturday at seven o'clock in this room," said Colonel Christmas. "There will be stories and some talk about them."

"And I'll have one to tell," the great man promised.

"I know your brother," said Ben Lovel, as he looked up at the millionaire.

"My brother!" Horton exclaimed.

"Your brother — Gabriel Horton," Lovel

added as quietly as if he were speaking of the weather.

The millionaire set down his glass and stared at the young man as if he knew not what to make of him.

"My God, sir!" he gasped, "my brother is dead."

"No—he is alive," said Lovel, slowly, as he went on with his eating.

"Boy, I'll give you a million dollars to bring him here," said the other eagerly.

Lovel looked at his watch and said: "It is not necessary; he will be here in ten minutes — I presume."

The room was warm and a window had been lowered.

"Listen, I think that he is coming now," said the young man raising his hand.

We could hear slow footsteps coming nearer on the stone flags beyond the window and their echoes in the air. And there was a kind of sadness in the sound.

"It is his step," Ben Lovel whispered.

The sounds fell into silence. Horton rose with a whispered exclamation.

Then we saw a bearded face against the window, with large, gray eyes that were peering in at us. It was the man whom I had

seen with Lovel after I left the lodgings of Cap'n Rone.

The millionaire rose and hurried through the open door. We followed him into the tap-room, where the brothers met and embraced each other. In a moment Horton turned and said to us: "Good night, boys; I must go with my brother. Please say nothing of this and make my excuses to the other dinner party."

The two went away together.

"This is sacred history," said Colonel Christmas. "Not a word about it — remember now."

"What's the story?" I asked Lovel.

"Ask Horton," said he; "it isn't my story."

And he would say nothing more of it.

CHAPTER IV

LOVEL and I stood talking together at the end of Kerrigan Place. It was nearing midnight and the others had left us and started for Park Row. I felt an odd pleasure in the company of my new friend and as he stood near me in the darkness I repeated my best poem. It makes me sad to think what a fool I was, and what a peril to the unwary, those days. He listened patiently and took my hand when I had finished and said kindly:

"I like it. Come up stairs and smoke a pipe with me."

I remember well the joy with which I followed him as we made our way up the hanging iron stair.

My companion lighted a candle and sat down upon the leathern seat of his work-bench while I took a chair.

"You came from England," he remarked as we were filling our pipes.

"And have been here about three years," I answered.

"And you cannot find your uncle?"

"Oh, you know about that!" I exclaimed with surprise, for with all my talking I had said little of my quest since I began it.

"Something," he said. "It was a hard task and you were wise to abandon it. Keep at work. I can see only one thing between you and success."

"What is that?" I asked eagerly.

"Yourself," he answered; "try to forget yourself. Think only of the other fellow — That reminds me — we must be off if we are to see my master, Condon, to-night," he said rising, "I have told him of you — that you were one to be trusted. Moreover, I have promised that you will stand with us and do what you can to help."

"I will do as you wish," was my answer; such was the confidence that he had made me feel.

We left the shop and made our way to one of the ferries and crossed and proceeded through dim-lit streets and alleys. My companion hurried and said not a word to me, but whistled in a low tone as he walked. Suddenly we saw a man standing in the street ahead of us.

"Friends?" he whispered, as we stopped beside him.

"True friends," Lovel answered under his breath.

"Of the hard hand?" the stranger asked as he shook hands with my companion.

"And the strong purpose," Lovel whispered.

"Come with me," said the other, and we followed him through a dark alley and turned into a doorway and climbed a flight of stairs and immediately descended two others.

There Lovel bade me wait a few minutes, and I stood in the darkness and heard him and his leader walking away. He returned soon and came and took my hand and led me through a long narrow passage, at the end of which a door swung open as we approached. It admitted us to a large, gloomy room where some two hundred men were sitting on rude benches, under a cloud of tobacco smoke. Burning gas-jets flung a dim light upon their heads. A platform at the end of an aisle, which divided the audience, held a table where a man sat with lighted candles on either side of him. He was speaking in a low tone as we passed down the aisle to seats near the table. It was he whose portrait I had seen in the clubroom below the lodgings of Cap'n Rone. I could see his strong face in the candlelight and hear his words plainly.

"I have heard some foolish talk here," he went on. "One has threatened to use his pistol; he will use his brains and throw his pistol away. Permit me to remind him, and others like him, that he will obey orders. Not a man will lift a hand without the consent of the Council. A member who does not obey is an enemy and a traitor and will be treated as such."

The chairman was interrupted by applause. He was a big-boned, brawny, deep-chested man of about forty, with gray eyes and dark, close-cut hair which had begun to turn a little above his ears. He had spoken quietly and with a faint Irish brogue and a suggestion of power behind his utterance. It came largely, I think, from his masterful face and manner, for many might have used better words.

"It is my master, Condon," Lovel whispered. "He is called the Napoleon of Discontent."

I had been reading of him that very day — a quiet, strong man who had come east from the Colorado mines some years before. There were prominent labour leaders, union presidents and heads of federations, but rumour had it that all took their orders from him. He was said to be a born leader, of conservative tendencies.

"And what meeting is this?" I asked Lovel.

"It is the Centre Link of the Toiler's Chain," he answered.

The chairman rapped for order and said:

"We will now hear from the delegate from St. Petersburg."

A full-bearded man rose and told in broken English how the Chain had been carried into Russia; of its troubles and the oppression it hoped to overcome. He told how money which had come from the Council in New York had been expended in that distant capital. In conclusion he begged for a private interview in relation to the "secret work."

"I will see you to-morrow," said the Napoleon, and called another delegate. Reports were heard from London, Birmingham, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Denver, Col., Pittsburg, Pa., and Cleveland, Ohio, after which the convention adjourned to resume its work on the morrow.

Lovel presented me to John Condon and commended me as a trusted friend. The Napoleon gave me his hand and a word of hearty greeting, and turned to others.

As we were leaving the place I heard the

tap of a cane on the floor and a familiar voice saying:

"Ho there, friendy!"

I turned and greeted Rog Rone, and hurried away with Lovel.

"Come with me and have a bite of supper," I suggested by way of returning his kindness.

"Come to my shop," he answered; "I have food and we will save our money."

We went straight to Kerrigan Place, and as he was turning the key in his door I could see that the night shadows had begun to lift. I went with him into a little room behind the shop where a bed and the floor were covered with the skins of animals.

"Do not speak or write of the Chain," he said to me; "Condon says little; he abhors publicity. Therefore, in this matter lay your hand upon your mouth."

I sat in a chair and he began to prepare coffee and thoughtfully whistled as he worked. Suddenly he came with the candle in his hand and stood looking into my face.

"My friend," he began, "I have a secret and I ask you to share it with me."

"Can I help you carry it?" I asked.

"Just that; the burden is too heavy and I need your help."

"Then I shall be glad to share it."

"I know all about you," he said, "and I am willing to put my life in your hands."

His life! I wondered what he could mean by that, but soon understood or thought so.

"While I trust you perfectly," he went on, "it is only fair that I should tell you this: mine is a dangerous secret."

He left the room and I could hear him turning the key in the street door.

"If it should be known that I had told you," he whispered on his return, "neither your life nor mine would be worth a penny. It is like having dynamite in your pockets."

"It doesn't frighten me," I answered.

He rose and poured my coffee and brought it with a plate of cold meat and bread.

"It is about my master, Condon," he whispered. "He loves me: I am the only one that he trusts like as one trusts a brother. When I say that a man is worthy and true he takes my word for it. So they admitted you to the chamber. But I had something hid in my heart — a purpose."

I had but just met him and yet he thought me worthy and true and was about to put his life in my hands!

"Trust me and in time you shall know all,"

he went on. "The chain is a mighty thing and there are few of its members, even, who know its power. You have heard of it, my brother, but it is like a river flowing underground. It comes out here and there, and you look and wonder but you do not know how great it is. There are a million men in this brotherhood and the number is growing. He holds them in his hand. My master, Condon, is their king."

"I should think it likely," was my answer.

"He began with a clean heart and a great purpose," Lovel went on; "but the clamour of the multitude, whose hearts are afire and who would have gold as plenty as the stones of the brooks, have almost borne him down."

He hesitated and I looked at him in silence.

"I believe him to be the most dangerous of men," he added in a whisper. "His arm reaches around the world. He touches many races. He might bring us all together into one great family of brothers, I have dared to hope. He might be a peacemaker; he chooses to be a Napoleon."

The noble face of the young man who sat beside me had grown very serious.

"I have read the heart of my master, Con-

don," he continued. "He knows not what to do; he is encompassed by evil men. He controls them with bloody discipline; but in spite of him their wrath overflows like a river. An emperor, the president of a republic, mayors of cities and many others have been slain by radical members who rebel against the light."

His slender body leaned toward me and his lips whispered close to my ear:

"Now, they have made a plot to sink all the navies. They will put a man upon every cruiser and battleship in the seven seas. He will watch his chance and fire her magazine. Oh, they do not fear to die — those men! They think it a grand cause — a death full of glory. I fear — I know that my master, Condon, is yielding. He hopes to rule the world; he dreams of a universal empire. Reckless adventurers, half-mad fanatics, offer their lives to him every day, and he is putting them on the rolls. They are his standing army and are ready to move when he gives the order. But he has paused at the brink of the precipice. He is deciding between peace and war. We must not let him fall."

I was appalled by what he had told me and sat dumb for half a moment. What was

this slender shoemaker going to do about it, and how had he got his knowledge?

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"I am going to turn him back," he answered calmly.

He went to a little writing table and picked up a pen and wrote hastily, as I waited. He took something from his desk and folded it with the sheets of paper, now covered with script, inclosed all in a large envelope and sealed it carefully.

"There," he whispered, as he put it in my hands. "If I should die open this and read what I have written and you will know what to do."

I lifted my hand, for I thought that I had heard some one stealthily trying the outer door. We went out into the little shop and stood listening. We heard a creak on the stairs and then the low tap of a cane on the pavement. We opened the door in time to see Rog Rone hurrying out of Kerrigan Place. Day had dawned although it was still a bit gloomy.

"Beware of the wolves!" said Lovel with a significant look at me. "He has turned south. I will let you out of the rear door and you may go the other way."

I thought no more of Rone, knowing too little of him then to understand the meaning of his appearance in Kerrigan Place, but as I left Lovel I wondered how he had come to know me so well and why he had chosen me to help him, and the envelope filled with mystery and suggesting deadly peril lay like a lump of lead in my pocket.

CHAPTER V

TWO weeks had passed since my talk with the shoemaker. Meanwhile my article about Condon and the great book of which I declared him to be the author had made no end of talk and brought me special praise from my editor. Of course I had read the book and in feeling it had made me what I had not been before — one of the innumerable family of men.

It was a plea for peace on earth and its tone was that of a solemn prayer. It gathered the bones of all who had died in battle and flung them together into a mountain that towered so high that none could see its summit; it gathered the treasure wasted in war and heaped it into another far greater than the first. Then it made me to see a mountain vaster than all others and that was the mountain of good which might have been accomplished with this wicked waste of blood and treasure — supposing that the slain had gone forth to labour with the treasure for their pay. It made me to see the river of human tears

that rose among these barren peaks and uncovered the truth that they had grown out of the vanity and conceit and vengefulness of a mere handful of men. It had revealed to me the monstrous inconsistency of war between Christian nations.

Two or three times I had been to the shop of the shoemaker and found it locked. Once only I had seen him again at the Lanthorne and, while his face had worn a troubled look, he had said nothing of Condon or the chain.

Cap'n Rone had made a cruise and returned to the city and might have been found any evening with his bottle of gin at the Silver Mug. I had promised to bring him to our school the next Saturday. It was to be a formal feast with three guests of honour: Horton, the millionaire, Shadpole, the novelist, and Berriman — the renowned Berriman — editor of the *Age*. This editor scanned all the horizons to discern the coming of great men. We had tried to help him in his search for high gifts of insight and expression. We had searched ourselves and discovered tales and poems and straightway sent them to his desk. He had declined them all with thanks, however, and how swiftly mine had come back! — like homing pigeons to roost unseen in the full and

gloomy loft of my bureau-drawer. This dinner would be the first thing he had ever accepted from us; it was at least encouraging as a sign of his confidence in the club. It gave us a chance to convince him of our talent and some of us trembled with hopeful anticipation. Darklight and Higgins were to read tales.

In discussing the arrangements I objected to dress suits, for it seemed unlikely that Cap'n Rog could be induced to wear one even if he had it. But the others rightly maintained that his bearing would be all the more impressive in formal dress.

So with extreme difficulty I had coaxed the Cap'n into an old suit of mine which did very well for him, and with a beaver hat, which he had bought at an auction for ninety cents and which he called his "topm'st," he was on his way to Kerrigan Place in my company. He felt the grandeur of my broadcloth and white linen and had refused to wear his overcoat, on the ground that he would look better without it. He carried his sny more gracefully and a large cigar tilting upward from the left corner of his mouth, and he lifted his cane with a lightsome flourish, now and then, as we proceeded. Often he looked down

at the cloth and once greeted himself with a merry little "ho, ho" — a something between laughter and congratulation — as if he had quite forgotten me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I'm on Jack's cross-tree, Cappy," he said with a swift wink of the eye. "Gran' slops an' a topm'st an' a load in my hold, an' wonderful good feelinks in the cabin."

He paused to speak "a lady" who kept an apple-stand, with that whistled greeting of his, and to try to catch her eye and went on.

"There's some as I used t' know in this 'ere port, friendy, an' I'd kind o' like t' cross their bows, I would."

For half a moment he walked on in silence with a grander swing than ever, if possible.

"Suppose you did?" I asked.

He answered with a little wave of his hand that he would bid them go to a place which would have been the last, I am sure, they would have chosen for their comfort.

"All but one," he amended after a moment's thought. "If she was here I'd just like to cut a curly-cue 'round her, so I would, an' show her that I can be a fine gent."

We had come to a sloppy corner where brick walls were being laid and there were

planks and mortar-beds at the crossing. The Cap'n, who was walking just ahead of me, stopped short.

"Belay, sonny," he said sharply to a man just ahead.

I saw that the stranger, in stepping on a plank, had flung little sprays of mortar up the port side of the Cap'n, who now faced him angrily.

"Ye ain't fit t' walk with no decent-dressed gent — so ye ain't," the Cap'n shouted with a savage wink of one eye. He flourished his cane and added: "You've sailed abreast o' me fer ten minutes an' I s'pect ye wanted a chanct t' gum me — dod ram yer pictur' — an' ye done it."

The stranger muttered an apology and hurried along. The Cap'n continued to wave his cane and denounce the manners and the "humly face" of the offender, and begged him to return and complete the "gumming" which he had so well begun. The man paused for a moment only and hurried out of hearing.

"It doesn't matter," I said in an effort to calm the Cap'n. "We must hurry."

But our troubles had just begun, for my companion had no sooner set his foot on the plank than it gave a hiss and up came a

sprinkle of slime that reached the lapels of his coat. He looked at himself and then at the wet plank.

"Oh, it's you as is layink fer the Cap'n, is it?" he inquired. "Very well, very well, I say — the Cap'n is right here," and his feet came down sharply on the plank which retaliated with missiles of mud and mortar that even reached his "topm'st."

"Hell's bells!" he exclaimed as he began baiting the piece of wood. "You can't throw gum scarcely any whatever at all. Try again."

So the fight began and as it proceeded the plank made the most of its opportunities. The Cap'n continued jumping as he addressed his enemy with the devil's joy in his countenance. He would stop, now and then, for breath and a brief look at himself and resume his jumping with renewed energy. I believe he would have turned upon me if I had interfered and so I let him alone.

"If I'm to be gummed I want to be gummed perfict," he advised the plank between jumps. "No half-way work fer the Cap'n — I say. Go on. Ye can't scare nobody ner hurt their feelinks any. Nobody cares what ye do. Try ag'in. You don't 'mount to

nothink at all in the least. Hell's bells! You're 'bout as poor a gummer as I ever seen."

Meanwhile the Cap'n was getting the worst of it. He was now well covered with slime and a sight to behold, with nobody to behold him, as luck would have it, but myself, for the street was then quite deserted. His "top-m'st" hung over one ear, his face had become red, grimy and damp with perspiration. In half a moment he had seized the plank in his great, powerful hands and raised it to his shoulder.

"I'll show ye that ye don't 'mount t' much, my fairy," he said as he balanced the twelve feet of damp timber and began to limp along with it. "You're 'bout as poor a specimint of a plank as I ever seen. Come an' take a walk. If ye can't throw gum no better 'n what ye have, it's time ye got out o' the way an' give some other plank a chanct."

I dared not say a word, but walked beside him in silence, while he continued to address the plank. Of course, the latter only answered with its weight and silence, and they were not without some effect. The Cap'n grew weary soon and leaned it against the side of a building and sat down by it.

"Wait here," I suggested, "while I get a cab and send you back to the inn."

"Don't mind me, my pippin," he said with a stern wink. "You stan' clear an' go on 'bout yer business. I'm hung up in the wind till this 'ere argyment is all over. I won't knuckle down fer no plank an' ye needn't 'spect it."

I knew it was a problem which he must figure out for himself and that my presence would only increase his humiliation and delay the end. I stood looking at the poor man while he turned to the inanimate piece of timber and went on with his argument.

"The Cap'n is right here," he said, crowding against the plank, "an' he's goink t' stay till this 'ere row is over an' it's all settled an' p'inted out whether you're better than I be."

The silence of the plank was at once convincing and impressive, and I hurried on, having no further time to lose, for the hour of the dinner had already passed.

Our room at the Lanthorne was full of light and good company. The dinner-party had sat down at the table and a fire crackled on the open hearth.

"Where is our friend, the Cap'n?" Colonel Christmas inquired.

I took my place among them and told of the Cap'n's unhappy and hopeless quarrel.

"The plank will soon floor him," said Pipps.

"There's a study for a novelist," said Colonel Christmas. "We need him in our zoölogical garden. He must be a rare and wonderful beast."

"And very human, too," said the great editor. "It's only a step from man to beast, as the novelist should remember."

"And perhaps only a step from man to angel," said Ben Lovel. "Most of us are about half-way up the ladder."

"And we can fall faster than we can climb — that's another point for the novelist," said Mr. Berriman. "We can slip from any round and make the whole descent in a second."

I sat by the side of Mr. Horton and asked, presently, for his brother, while the others went on with their talk.

"Gone," said he; "gone as strangely as he came. Left the day before yesterday, just as he left us twenty years ago. Went to his room at night and since then nothing has been seen of him. Singular sort of man and always was. Told me that he'd been out of the world, but wouldn't tell me where. In

my opinion he's a little out of his mind. Didn't have much to say; glad to see me, and all that. Glad to see my family, but rather restless and discontented. Acted like a man in a dream. Did our best, but couldn't make him feel at home, and away he went. I found Mr. Lovel yesterday and we had a talk. You remember that he knew my brother and told us that he was coming the other night. That's rather strange isn't it?"

"Rather," I agreed.

While we talked our friends were telling stories suggested by the case of Rone.

"Lovel interests me," said the millionaire confidentially; "there's more to him than any of you suspect. He's a pleasant sort of mystery. I don't know what to make of the boy. I tried to pump him but he gently turned me around and I quit."

"He's a wonderful man," I said. "We love him but we do not pretend to understand him."

"I want to know him better and have asked him to come up to my house. I want to sit down with him for an evening and see if I can make him out."

So went my talk with the great man and nothing more was said of any bearing on

events to come. He seemed to like me, and by and by, Colonel Christmas rapped for order and introduced my companion.

"I can remember when I was younger and poorer than any of you," the millionaire began amid applause and exclamations regarding the length of his memory. "I landed in this city years ago with eighty cents and a great hope. Every day I looked for a job and slept on a park bench at night. There were lots of men out of work, those days. It was rather cold and three of us would snug up together on the same bench and lie against each other and cover ourselves with newspapers the best we could. When the sun rose we would go to the fountain and bathe our hands and faces. I had a piece of a looking-glass, about two inches square, and another fellow had a small comb and we would pass them around and slick up and brush each other with a newspaper frayed like a whisk-broom. Then three cents for a cup of coffee and a piece of bread and away we went up Broadway to seek our fortunes.

"You see, we were friendless, but respectable and fairly well dressed. I took the first thing that was offered and became "squeezer" in a great bar-room at fifty cents a day and my board. Had to squeeze lemons and strain

and bottle the juice. By and by I got a place in a bank and learned the business, and went West, and things came my way. Good luck has made me a millionaire and bad luck has made me a human being."

There was half a moment of silence. Then said Colonel Christmas:

"There has been a change in the gang lately — a change of character and purpose. The first fruit of that change I will now present to you in a tale by Mr. Darknight."

The young man rose and held his manuscript in trembling hands and read his sketch, an indispensable part of our record with threads reaching into my mystery as I came to know by and by. Here it is just as I copied it from the minutes of the school:

THE STORY OF A PASSION

Bibbs's was a gloomy little heaven up one flight, and Bibbs a bald and cranky little god of violins, with whiskers half as long as himself and white as snow. His windows overlooked the Bowery, and their dusty panes hastened the twilight and delayed the dawn, robbing the day of an hour at each end. The elevated trains went rushing past them, but somehow there was silence in the little shop;

or was it but the sign of silence that one saw on every side? — the hushed string, the whisper-haunted galleries of pine and maple, the uncommunicative Bibbs.

Once it had been a busy place, but the centre of wealth and fashion had retreated from it year by year and now it was a mere nursery of violins. And some that lay upon its counter forty years ago were there to-day, and time had poured its floods of light upon them and dipped them in the silence and the gloom of night, and filtered through their fibres strains of song and sound until they came to years of understanding like to those of men, and had a voice for human thought. Men came to buy them, often, but, late years, had found it hard to deal with Bibbs. Raw-toned, young violins he sometimes sold, and cheaply, but not the old ones that had been his hope and company for years — not for all the wealth in Gotham. His love of them was constant and his price beyond all reach or reason. The sale of the Maggini had been a sorry bargain, though it brought him twice its value. He had not expected that the man would buy it at a price so high. But the money was paid and the Maggini became the darling of another owner, who made off with it, while Bibbs stood speechless and con-

fused, and then, as the good wife was fond of telling, "he went a lead colour."

Now buyers came more rarely, and his wife was dead, and Bibbs lived quite alone.

It was early twilight in the little shop. Bibbs lighted a candle, set aside his pots of glue and varnish, and stood a moment thrumming the solemn old Amati he had just mended. Then he played a strain of music on its silver string. It was the "Song of Faith" from "Elijah." A deep amen went booming under the red dome of the bass viol that lay in a corner, and a low wail of sympathy swept through the cases on the counter and along the walls — the voice of those condemned to silence in this little shop.

"Yes, yes," said Bibbs tenderly; "I say rest in Time, for Time is the Lord, and there's time enough to make all things perfect, even men. You are like a soul. When you were only seventy years old, I suppose the devil had his home in you, as he has in me. Goodness is but harmony, and you might be better, you red-bellied son of a whittler!"

As had been his custom by day for years, Bibbs carefully inspected the joinings of the Stradivarius. Then he held his ear against it, and the strings broke into song at the touch of his beard.

"That voice of yours!" he said. "I wonder what it will be a thousand years from now. Your old body will turn to splinters and to dust some time. Wood can't last forever any more than flesh and blood. When your voice is near perfection you will not be strong enough to stand the strain of the strings, and then — well, you're a good deal like a man anyhow."

To Bibbs heaven was the destination of all good violins and hell was, in his opinion, the resort of fiddlers, and their playing the doom of the damned.

Bibbs put the Strad in its case and turned the key. He stood a moment silently filling his pipe. A melancholy 'cello lying on the floor, let go a string, humming like a lovesick maiden.

Bibbs was about to make all fast and retire to his little room, behind the shop, when suddenly the door opened, clanging the bell that hung above it. An old man, with shaven, wrinkled face and long white hair, stood before him.

"Any old violins?" said he, advancing into the shop.

"None to sell," said Bibbs curtly.

"I do not wish to buy," said the old man, "but I am a connoisseur and I should like to see them."

Now there were men to whom Bibbs

gave some toleration and even a degree of confidence — men who had grown old with violins and loved them as he did.

"Sit down," said he, pointing to a chair. "I've an Amati, a Guarnerius and a Strad here. They're not mine; I only take care of them. Play?"

"Once; but you see my fingers have grown stiff — these wrinkles are like strings that bind them."

Bibbs took the Strad from its case and thrummed it, and as he did so the stranger rose and staggered toward him. "Let me take it," said he, and his lips quivered as he spoke.

"Stand back, you fool," said Bibbs; "you cannot buy this instrument. It is not for sale, I tell you."

"I shall not try to buy it," said the stranger. "You can trust it in my hands a moment. Let me see it; I think I know the tone."

Bibbs hesitated, surveying his caller with suspicious eyes. Then he closed the door and bolted it.

"Be careful," he said; "don't drop it." And with anxious looks he put it in the stranger's hands.

As the old man took the instrument he uttered but a single word, and that was, "Sweetheart." Then he kissed its back and sank upon his chair, sobbing softly.

He held the Strad across his knee, and every tear that fell upon its slender roof sounded like a fairy drum-beat; and when his sobbing ceased a cry rang faintly in its darkened hall; and the great bass viol and all the daughters of music lying low in the little shop moaned in sympathy as if they knew and felt and understood.

"Pardon me," said the stranger. "I seem to hear the voice of one long dead and dear to me. Thirty years ago it was mine. I fell ill and pledged it for a loan. That was in London. I was a long time between life and death, and when I came to get the Strad they had sold it for the debt. Listen: I will show you what a voice it has."

He tuned the strings and played, and as he played his fettered fingers were made free. His quick bow, like a trident, shook the sea 'twixt heaven and earth — the sea of silence — and waves of music started for its further strand. Far into the night these old men sat together, and the player never rested.

Now it so befell there was a tenant in the Strad who had never heard its thunders. Suddenly a black spider rushed out of the dark cavern of the violin, and scurrying down the fingerboard, was crushed beneath the strings. The player stopped.

"It's a bad sign," said Bibbs. "Sorry you came here. You cannot buy the Strad and now there's no peace for you."

"Unless you let me live here and help you tend the shop," the stranger said. "I have money and we both love music, and you are alone."

"Yes," said Bibbs, "but if he comes — the owner — and takes it from us?"

"But he may not come for years," the stranger said; "and let's not borrow trouble."

And so Bibbs made him welcome, and the old men lived together happily but ever fearful. Day by day they played upon the Strad and when the door-bell rang there was a moment's panic in the shop, and men who came were roundly cursed by Bibbs and came no more.

It was morning at Bibbs's. Its old master came slowly out of his silent room, the Strad under his arm. He laid the violin upon its shelf and lifted the window-shades. The sun lit up his pale and haggard face. Suddenly the bell above the door clanged furiously and a man stepped in.

"Hello, Bibbs! Give me the Stradivarius," said he.

Bibbs lifted the violin with trembling hands.

"See that dark little cavern?" said the

old man, peering into a sound hole. "I tell you it is a bit of the undiscovered country. Songs of some other world come out of it. To-day there's a new voice in the choir."

He thrummed a moment.

"Bibbs, what do you mean?" said the owner.

"He is dead — the man that loved the Strad is dead," said Bibbs. "Take it, sir, and be gone — be gone, I tell you."

And its owner took it, and as he went away he laughed and muttered, saying, "Bibbs is crazy."

The little tale received its compliment of silence.

I observed that Lovel had been deeply interested.

"It is a true tale," Horton remarked presently; "I know the shopkeeper and I am the owner who called for the Strad. I have owned it for twenty years."

"Could I see it?" Lovel asked.

"Yes; come to my house to-morrow evening at 8.30 and you shall see it," said the millionaire.

"It will be a great favour," Lovel answered.

There was a moment of silence broken by Shadpole who said: "Romance seems to

thrive in this atmosphere. I wonder if this is the literary club referred to in 'Brothers.' Have any of you read the book?"

"I have," said Berriman. "It's a wonderful book. In England they say every one is talking about it. I saw by a cable message this morning that it was being translated into many tongues."

"They say that Condon wrote it — John Condon — the so-called Napoleon of Discontent," said Shadpole.

"I think that is true," said Berriman; "I understand, at least, that the royalties are to be paid to him — and he doesn't deny the authorship."

"I know he's very able," said the novelist, "but who thought of such a heart in him? It's inspiring."

"And what a breadth of view!" said Berriman.

The Colonel rose and the dinner had come to its end. Lovel and I left the Lanthorne while the others were standing in the tap-room.

"Let's walk awhile," said he, and we left Kerrigan Place and strolled aimlessly up town. We soon passed the plank which was leaning where I had seen it last but the Cap'n had gone. We walked a bit farther and while

I had much to say and great hope of getting more light on the mystery of Horton's brother, I urged him to go home, noting his wearied manner; and soon we parted for the night.

Next morning I was awakened by a rap at my door. When I opened it, Lovel stood in the hallway.

"Come in," I said.

He picked up my shoes, which lay outside the door, and brought them with him. He turned them in his hands and pointed to a little paster not an inch square in the hollow of one sole. It was a miniature target, its bull's eye and rings printed in red on white paper.

"What is it?" I asked.

"The man Rone is a spy and a marker," he whispered as he turned to me. "It is the war sign of the Toilers."

"Their war sign!" I exclaimed.

"Yes; a device by which the supposed enemies of the order may be known at a glance. Some wear it for days not knowing that they are marked."

I wondered how that could be but more pressing queries were in my mind.

"Does it mean that one is marked for removal?" I asked.

"In most cases, no," he answered. "It is a warning and they will watch him as the hawk watches its prey. He might fall from a high bridge or drop from the end of a pier, or be smothered in his room by gas. Very often it is made to appear that he has died by his own hand. They may kill him in a quarrel or they may let him alone. His fate will hang on the trouble and the chance he gives them. Change your boarding-place but do not touch the mark until we meet again. Now see if you have the sealed letter that I gave you."

I had pushed it under the lining of my trunk and carefully tacked the slit. I felt secure in that matter and so assured him.

"Look," he insisted.

I unlocked the trunk and threw up its lid. There were the tacks that held the lining and beneath I could feel the envelope. I pointed with my finger and looked up at him.

"Draw the tacks and make sure, my master," he whispered.

I did so and out came the envelope with its seal broken and a few sheets of blank paper inside. Lovel turned chalky white and sank into a chair.

"I met the knave outside and saw it all in

his face," he whispered presently. "His staying with the plank was a trick, my master — a trick to get you to leave him. He saw you anchored in Kerrigan Place and came back here and searched your room at his leisure. It is probable that he was looking through the window that night and saw you put the envelope in your pocket."

"We're both in danger?" I suggested.

"I shall appeal to Condon," he whispered. "Be wise as a serpent, and be careful how you go out alone at night."

He picked up his hat and left me, with a worried look.

I examined the symbol and thought how cleverly Rone had placed it, for few men ever see the bottoms of their shoes. Yet one's soles show their full length to all who walk behind them.

I packed my things, paid my bill and started in quest of a new boarding-place. Rog Rone met me on the sidewalk.

"What's ahead, Cappy?" he inquired as he wrung my hand.

"Going to leave the Mug," I answered.

"I'll miss ye, Cappy," said he. "Yer dear father couldn't miss ye no more — an' that's the God's truth. I'll find ye, no matter

how fur ye go — so I will. You're a wonderful cute child an' I've took a fancy to ye."

The old wretch brushed a tear from his eye, and I said that I would see him soon, which I knew to be likely, and hurried away.

CHAPTER VI

It is idle to think that by means of words any real communication can ever pass from one man to another. The lips or the tongue may represent the soul even as a cipher or a number may represent a picture by Memlincq; but from the moment that we have something to say to each other we are compelled to hold our peace; and if at such times we do not listen to the urgent commands of silence, inaudible though they be, we shall have suffered an eternal loss that all the treasures of human wisdom cannot make good, for we shall have let slip the opportunity of listening to another soul.

MAETERLINCK

I SAW nothing of Rone or Lovel for a week. I had called once at the office of Israel Horton to get his advice in a certain matter and while there had shown him my letters of commendation. They were from friends of my father in England, one of whom was the Premier himself.

Within a day or two I called a second time to see the millionaire at the request of my editor who wished me to write the story of Horton's life.

"Can't talk with you now, boy," said the railroad king as he came out of his private room. "Come to dinner with me to-morrow

at seven and I'll show you my note-books and the capitol of my little kingdom. Condon will be there."

So I went to his home — a great, square house of white marble, planned for large hospitality and filled with costly treasures. The best of them was his daughter Ruth, who was my companion at dinner.

Mr. Horton was a man of wit and a remarkable memory. He had read the best books and could give you lines for every cue. He was a kindly man, and I learned to love him in spite of traits that were sharper than a serpent's tooth. Sometimes he had a way of using one for a pedestal.

"Holm," he would say, suddenly, as all eyes were turned upon me, "what was it that Shakespeare wrote about the sea?"

Then a crushing silence while I groped in my memory and humbly acknowledged my ignorance. Suddenly the millionaire would exclaim:

"O, I have it!" and glibly speak the lines for which he had thus created an opportunity.

Condon sat beside Mr. Horton.

"I haven't had time to tell you of half the profit and delight your book has given me," said the latter to his chief guest as soon as a

certain bishop had pronounced the blessing. "Every one is reading and re-reading the book."

"He's very kind — this Mr. Everyone," Condon rejoined. "He sends me hundreds of letters a day about it and I'm rather busy with them. I intended to keep out of sight in the matter."

"It's lucky you couldn't," said the other. "Think what it's done for you and your cause. We know what to expect from you now, and we shall hold you up to your preaching. If you are true to your principles you will have the confidence of the world and more money than you ever dreamed of. You will have an empire with no boundaries."

"You offer great promotion," said the Napoleon of Discontent with a smile.

"And remember — it's worth while," said the millionaire.

"But I could be happy with far less."

In the light of all I knew, here was an odd bit of comedy. It reversed that third temptation of the devil when he offered all the kingdoms of the world to the Son of God. It seemed as if all the kingdoms were now being offered as the prize of righteousness. As to the book itself, I had no doubt that Condon

had written it years before and had since fallen from its lofty plane. If not, how could he now be on the brink of declaring a bloody war himself, as I knew. Soon the topic changed.

"We had a great evening with your friend Lovel," Horton said to me.

"Did you show him the violin?" I asked.

"Yes; and he showed me how to play on a Strad. He is a master."

"That is new to me," I said.

"He captured us; we sat and listened till midnight. He won the ladies; they thought him very handsome."

"His playing is wonderful, but his face more so," said Ruth Horton. "What a pity such a man is a shoemaker!"

"I offered to put him in better business, but it didn't interest him," said her father. "He's perfectly contented."

"I wish he were anything but a shoemaker," the girl added.

We had risen from the table when Mr. Horton said to me:

"Young man, I'm sorry the madame isn't here. She knows the whole story. I have some business with Mr. Condon up in my room. You go into the library and talk with

Ruth. She knows a lot about me and can show you the note-books. Give my best wishes to Lovel; I am much in debt to him. It was he who presented me to Condon and induced me to read his book."

Mr. Horton went above stairs and I to the library with the young lady and her grandfather and the bishop and his wife. The others fell to talking about Condon's book, while the young lady and I sat down together. Then came the best hour of my life — I cannot just tell you why for there was little in our talk to make it so. She was a full-sized, wholesome, fun-loving girl and I did not think her beautiful, but somehow she filled my eye. Secretly, quietly, I took possession of her, then and there, as by some indisputable right, and resolved to make her my wife. Of course, I knew there were difficulties to overcome, but they gave me no uneasiness. She showed me the note-books, and soon I asked her about her uncle Gabriel whom I had seen twice. She thought that he had lived as a hermit, somewhere, and had gone back to his lonely life. She told of his shyness and reticence and said that talk wearied him.

"One evening as we sat here together," she went on, "he told me that he cared little

for words. He said they were used mostly to conceal thought and not to express it. He startled me by saying that he went beneath the words that people said to him and felt their thoughts and I think it made him unhappy. I am trying it myself."

"Then I shall be very careful," I remarked.

She gave me a knowing smile and showed me a beautifully modelled hand, as she felt her dark hair, and went on:

"I think we all have more insight than we know. We meet people and we ask, 'How do you do?' and all that and scarcely hear what they say but, somehow, we begin to feel for their thoughts and find them, whatever their words may be."

"It is true," I said, "and this also, that a man can never deceive any one but himself for more than a brief time."

She hummed a line from an old love song as she turned the leaves of a note-book.

"That's strange," I said; "my mind has been singing that song ever since we left the table."

"You see, minds have the power to communicate with each other in spite of us," she said, as her brown eyes looked into mine. "You might take these notes with you; he

dictated them to me. There's only one or two things I could add to them. He's the best father in the world and I recommend him to you for a friend."

When I rose to go there was that in the clasp of our hands and the look of our faces that seemed to speak for us, and I was sure that we understood each other.

"One thing more," she added with a smile, "please remember me to Mr. Lovel."

"I shall do so," I answered with as good grace as would go with my disappointment, for, suddenly, I had seen the truth in her eyes — she was fond of the little shoemaker. But I would not let myself doubt that I should win her.

I went straight to the shop in Kerrigan Place and found Lovel at work there.

"I have been dining at Horton's," I said.

"Did you see his daughter?"

"Yes, and I bring her best wishes."

"She's led me out of my way," he said. "Lately I've done little but think of her."

"Lovel!" I exclaimed with surprise, "what are we to do? I'm in love with her myself."

"She will not care for me!" he exclaimed.

"I am sure that she does care for you," I said.

He put down the shoe which he had been mending and looked up at me. His cheeks reddened; for a second his eyes were full of wonder and delight. Then he turned very thoughtful.

"If she does it cannot last," he answered.

"Why?"

"I am a toiler; I work for my bread."

"She knows that."

"But not the difficulties that lie between us. You will not find me a formidable rival."

Again he bent over his task.

"Couldn't you find better work than this?" I asked; "something easier and more profitable?"

He shook his head doubtfully.

"They tell me that you are a great violinist."

"There are many greater," he answered. "I love music, but the people are more in need of shoes."

"Wouldn't they pay more for the music?"

"Yes; but I have no need of their money."

"You might be able to buy many more shoes than you can make."

"True; but I must walk with my brothers and know what it is to be a man."

I sat for a moment looking into his face

and wondering what he meant. He seemed to feel my thoughts for he added presently:

"Some time you will know me better."

Next day I went to the office of Mr. Horton. He took me into his private room and closed the door and we sat down together. I had made a plan for the story.

"There's something I must say before I go any further," I began.

"What is it?"

"A fact in your life and mine that has brought me to a point of honour."

"Out with it, boy."

"I will not deceive you for a moment," I said. "You have the dearest daughter in the world, and I am in love with her."

He looked at me almost sternly and then his face softened to a smile. He leaned toward me and put his hand on my arm and said rather tenderly:

"It's a pity, my boy! I'm sorry for you."

"Why?"

"You couldn't marry her. It's impossible."

"Pardon my presumption, but I've done so many impossible things — it's a habit with me."

"I've done a few myself, but there's a limit," said the millionaire. "I like you, boy,

but can't you see it's out of the question? The girl has been spoiled. Why, I suppose it costs me ten thousand a year to dress her. What would you do with a wife like that? You have to work for a living."

"True," I said; "but I hoped that you wouldn't think the less of me on that account."

"Well, you know I've been poor myself and I've no false pride in me. But think of it, my boy, she has always carried the lamp of Aladdin. She has only to wish and to have. Her life is no more real than that of Jack and the beanstalk. Now, honestly, do you think she could live in a little flat or a small house in the suburbs with one servant and a very limited income? Of course, I could stake you, but you're a man of pride and you wouldn't care to be a pensioner."

"No, but she may be willing to try real life for a while," I said. "I think that she is weary of being a fairy princess. You ought to give her a chance to be a woman. Poverty isn't the worst thing in the world. In fact, I've heard you recommend it highly."

"I know all that, but I'm a slave, as Lovel put it. Now there's her mother. She has more to say than I about this sort of thing. The poor woman has dreams of a grand

alliance with noble blood. I know it's all nonsense and I hope she'll recover, but the odds are against you, boy."

"If I'm not mistaken, by good rights the girl is mine," I said; "and I'd like a chance to win her if I can. One of these days I hope to be rich."

He looked at me thoughtfully for half a moment.

"I like you," he said with a smile; "but tell me, what are your prospects?"

"For a year I've put all my savings in land in the upper part of the city, and before long I hope to sell at a handsome profit."

He leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"It's great to be young," he said with a tone of kindness and a look of amusement. "I want to be fair to you. I shall not say that you cannot see the girl; but there must be no love talk and not a word about marriage until I say, go ahead. I make no promises."

"And I ask for none and will do your bidding," was my answer.

Then a short talk about the story, and I left him with a better hope in me than I had ever known. But I soon lost faith in the promise of that day, for I called time and again

at the great white house, but saw nothing more of the young lady. Mrs. Horton received me kindly but made me know, between words, that she was aware of my purpose and could give me no hope.

CHAPTER VII

IT IS odd how, once in a long while, Life makes a plot, like that of a story, and calls its characters from the ends of the earth and they assemble and are promptly driven to their parts. When I look back on the years of my young manhood they are like a tale that is told. The Lanthorne was its centre and every character and incident and almost every word of those nights under the old sign brought us nearer the climax.

As I have explained, Colonel Christmas had the post of "religious editor" on one of the great newspapers. It should be said that the title related more to his work than his sentiments. He was genial, save when he had drunk too freely. Then, having been robbed of an evening, long before, while in his cups, he regarded every one with suspicion.

As he sat at the head of the table in our cozy room at the Lanthorne, every pound of the two hundred and ninety-five that composed his person seemed to feel the greatness of the night. His face glowed with good

nature. A sense of responsibility filled his breast. He was not a man of proved literary skill like Pipps or Darklight. Still he did not conceal the fact that he had ambitions. Whenever he told an anecdote of possible literary value he always added the words: "Copyright by H. F. Christmas."

We were beginning the tenth and greatest session of The School for Novelists. Ben Lovel sat beside me; I had seen him two or three times at the little shop.

"They have their necks in a leash — those madmen," he had said to me one evening. "But they will break away soon and we must look out."

Meanwhile he had achieved unwelcome prominence in two ways — he had saved a number of children in a school fire, at the peril of his own life, and been elected president of the Mechanics' Union. Lovel had declined the place, and seemed to regard its offer as a misfortune.

"I was born to be a servant and not a master," he had said to me, in speaking of this event. "I love obscurity. It is a part of my plan. Try to stop this talk about me. Some day I shall make you to know why."

I looked about me that evening and thought

how the "gang" had changed. In the beginning our dinners had been characterized by over-drinking and high-flavoured wit and, indeed, anything for a laugh. All that was pretty much a thing of the past with us. Now we were studying an art and thinking decently and with some results.

Pipps had satirized his fellows in this fashion: "It seems to me that we should have an evening of readings from an expurgated edition of Felicia Hemans!"

I asked myself how it had come about, and what would be the next stage of our development.

Then, right on the heels of my unspoken query, came Lovel's suggestion: "I have this to say to you, my master: Every stream must have a source. Shall we try to make a river of expression without a lake of thought —a lake somewhere up in the mountains of truth? First, fill your lake, I should say, and think not of your style. Thoughts — leagues and fathoms of them, drained from the heights, are needed here. Then let the rivers flow as they will."

"It is true," said Darklight as he looked across the table at us. "We waste time with trifles. I've found a lake of thought for you.

"Listen — you men who are studying life," he went on, with great seriousness, to the whole company, "if you will come with me, to-morrow, I will show you the greatest event of the century."

His lips began to tremble a bit, as they always did when he was full of his subject. He leaned forward and added, impressively, as he rubbed his hands together:

"Absolutely the most startling and significant thing that has happened in a century!"

"Are you going to pay your debts?" Pipps inquired with a smile.

"What do you expect — miracles?" said Darklight as he joined the laugh. "No, but I'll show you the end of another impossibility — ingrate — and I offer you the chance to see it."

Darklight was editor of one of the big Sunday newspapers, and lived in an atmosphere of amazement. Three of us said that we would go, and he looked straight across at me with eyes solemn as a prophet's and said:

"Pier No. 5; three o'clock sharp. Horton will be there, and one or two others."

Colonel Christmas rose and tapped his coffee-cup and called the school to order.

He said that he was proud of the honour of presiding at the dinners of our club. He saw the footprints of high thought in every face at the table (laughter and applause and cries of not guilty). He saw brows shaped for the accommodation of the laurel. (More applause and the query: "How about our necks?" and the Colonel answered that they were beneath his observation.) He fondly hoped that the club was making history and that some of its humble efforts were to pass into literature. He would begin the flow of soul with a poem — a rather remarkable poem, he would venture to say — from the facile pen of Mr. Holm.

I had written some account of Rog Rone's adventure in battle and presented it forthwith — my first contribution to the minutes of the club.

A number of reporters had been invited to confess their worst sins, and so that the reader may be fairly warned of his company at the Lanthorne sign I have copied one of them from the minutes of the club. Pipps set the ball going.

"I will now show you the hard spots in a tender man," said he, and proceeded to tell how he had gone to witness a hanging in New Jersey.

The unfortunate man was to be hanged at three o'clock, and Pipps had asked all concerned to make it two, so as to give him time to get his account in the evening paper. The sheriff had consented on one condition — he must get the concurrence of the doomed man. Pipps presented his argument to the latter.

"You have to be hanged anyway, and the sooner the better," he said. "It would be a great favour to me."

"We're alike as two peas," said the murderer as he surveyed the young man. "Will you be kind enough to be hanged in my place? I'll take your suit and you take mine, and I'll write the story. You'll have to be hanged some time, and the sooner the better. It would be a great favour to me."

The last man to be presented was the lecturer in a dime museum. He was wont to stand all day in a dress suit and descant in rhyme on the freaks and wonders of the show. He called himself a poet, and had long black hair and one eye, and regarded his gift with delightful gravity. He spoke with a slight English accent.

"I have always enjoyed literature," he began. "I once wrote a one-act version of Macbeth, in which I toured England and the

provinces with my daughter. Stunning success! Great applause! Unanimous commendation from press and public! My daughter is a wonderful scholar and we live in a lovely flat in Sixteenth Street. When I have a poem to write I sit down in my little library and go into a kind of trance." (He called it trahnce). "My daughter keeps away from me then for, like all poets, I am apt to be cross in the act of composing. By and by it comes like a flash — I couldn't tell ye how — and there it is — a long poem or perhaps only a little gem of half a dozen lines. I laugh with joy, and my daughter enters and I read it to her. I have written a reversible poem which will do for a fat boy or a living skeleton. It is as follows:

"'There was a boy
His mamma's joy
His papa's pride and pet,
The more he'd eat
Of bread and meat
The thinner he would get.'

"Now all I have to do is to change thinner to fatter and the poem is reversed. I wrote it in three minutes by the watch. Of course, it is a gift like playing the violin or telling a fortune.

"I can make a rhyme for any word in the language," the one-eyed poet went on. "I am probably the only bard living who has made a rhyme for 'orange,' and another for 'month.' A man offered me ten dollars to do it, and my daughter found that there was a province in Wales called the Bloringe, and a Hindu book of etiquette which is known as a grunth. In a second I had the poem, and I will now recite it for you:

"'From the Indies to the Bloringe
The Grand Mogul came in a month
All the way he sucked an orange
While he gaily read a grunth.'"

This exploit of the suctorious Mogul was greeted with applause, as it well deserved to be.

The one-eyed poet paused and amiably scanned the faces at the table and continued:

"Shakespeare said that the poet is born and not made. It is true, gentlemen. Poetry is a gift and I thank God for it. Poetry has given me my place as the best paid introducer of curiosities in the world and the only one who writes a poem for every novelty. I must now hurry to the last performance of our world-renowned convention of curiosities. Gentlemen, I thank you, one and all, for your kind and generous applause. Good night."

With this, and a wave of his hand, the one-eyed poet left us and hurried into the night. Our pent emotions, suddenly released, quite overcame us.

"It's the best exhibit of one-eyed poetry that I ever saw," said Pipps.

"There's nothing half so funny as the lack of humour," said Darklight, and that, indeed, was the lesson which came of it.

But, as for myself, I was not yet done with the bard, having promised, in a moment of weakness, to try to find a publisher for his verse.

Colonel Christmas had become suspicious and also indirect in his walk and conversation when we left the inn. Keeping him upright was attended by such a degree of danger and difficulty that we hailed a hansom and helped the Colonel into it. His broad person filled the seat, and Lovel and I crouched by his feet and directed the driver to his lodgings. When we arrived there Colonel Christmas had gone to sleep. We tried to waken him but could only produce a dangerous and spasmodic movement of his arms and feet. The driver tried force and persuasion, but the Colonel brushed him aside and continued his slumber.

"You may as well try to move a house," said the driver in despair; "he's got us anchored, and me engaged for a ball."

There was no help for it; we must await the revival of Colonel Christmas, and that is what we did. A street lamp stood near us and we sat down and leaned against the post while our driver, who had an engagement for a ball, complained bitterly of his ill luck. He held his peace, however, when I assured him that he should be well paid.

It was long after midnight when a young woman passed us and inquired her way. She was still in sight when a policeman stopped her, and so rudely that we jumped to our feet and ran toward them. The policeman had arrested the girl, who was now sobbing, and started away with her. Lovel stopped him and asked what she had done.

"You keep out of this," said the officer, "or I'll take you, too."

"Please give me your number," Lovel demanded.

The officer answered more rudely than before, and made off with the prisoner.

"You attend the Colonel," said my friend as he turned to me. "As for myself, I must go where they go." So saying he disappeared

in the darkness and I saw no more of him until morning.

It was growing light when the Colonel came to and stumbled out of the cab. He fell upon the anxious driver, bearing him to the ground and wounding his spirit worse than his body, as luck would have it. I could not help laughing.

"Sir, rejoice not in the fall of friend or enemy," said Colonel Christmas, having struggled to his feet. "This is disgraceful."

"It's awful, sir," said the driver in a tone of complaint. "You grabbed my cab and went to sleep on me, an' couldn't be woke, an' I engaged for a ball. It's dirty mean."

"Poor man! Why didn't you wake me?"

"Didn't I try? an' ain't I all hammered to a jelly?"

"Heal your wounds and be off," said Colonel Christmas severely as he gave the driver a twenty-dollar bill. The latter drove away and the Colonel turned to me and said:

"Sir, forgive me. I have the heart of an honest man and the intellect of an ass; I am as a ship without a compass. Will you kindly steer me to my door?"

That I did forthwith and started for my own lodgings on Waverly Place.

Suddenly I heard the tap of a cane on the pavement close behind me and turned and saw Rog Rone approaching with his hurried and familiar limp. The sound quickened my heart and pace a little for it seemed to me that the man had sprung out of the ground. I had seen nothing of him since leaving the Mug although more than once I had heard the tap of his cane. My introduction to the war sign had made me step softly. I had worn a false beard and put a limp in my walk when returning after hours from my task and had gone to bed in the dim window-light and often before falling asleep I had heard the tap, tap of a cane on the pavement beneath my windows. Every night too, I had heard it in my dreams. Now I felt some alarm but quickly put it down.

"Ho there, friendy!" said the Cap'n as we came under a street lamp. "Whatever's this 'ere on yer coat sleeve?"

He put his knotty fore-finger on the back of my elbow as he spoke.

"Fore God, matey — its the red target — sure as ye're born," he went on as he tore the tiny paster from the sleeve of my coat.

"What does it mean?" I asked, my nerves tingling with fresh alarm.

"What does it mean?—you says," he began in a tone just above a whisper. "I says it means yer marked, pippin—tagged an' ticketed for yer 'eavenly 'ome, boy, like a lamb in a crate on his way to the butcher's—an' what do ye think 'o that?"

He tore the piece of paper into bits.

"An' what does this mean—I'd like to know?" he said as he scattered them in the wind. "It means that I'm tryink to help ye—so it does. It means that yer own father couldn't love ye no better, I dare presume to say."

I looked at him, sorely puzzled, and for a breath it seemed to me that Lovel must have been wrong in his estimate of this singular man.

"Thank you," I said, "but I wish you would explain to me how it is that I am so flattered. I never thought myself big enough to be in anybody's way."

"It's your trouble, pippin, as the bird said to the worm," Rog Rone went on as we resumed our walk. "I happen to know some things that you don't, an' you know some that I don't, which, as I often say, is the way o' the world an' no wonder. We both have enemies, I dare presume to say. I

knowed that you was marked, long ago, an' I says to myself, I says, Cap'n Rog, don't ye let no harm come to the dear pippin — hope to die if I didn't an' I kep' an' eye on ye, matey — so I did — an' I warned them as wanted t' do ye harm. Many a night I've seen ye git off the car at Broadway with them there whiskers on an' a hitch in yer gait an' I knowed ye — an' kep' my eye on ye very sharp an' careful — so I did."

I was dumb with surprise for half a moment. At the next lamp light I stopped and looked into the wrinkled face of the Cap'n.

"You are the most singular man that I ever met in my life," I said. "Why, why have you done this?"

"'Cause I've took a fancy to ye an' I'll make ye rich one o' these days — you mind my word, pippin." Rone gave me a shrewd wink.

"You an' me'll do some business together — I feel it in my bones," he added.

"Look here," I said, as I drew a large revolver from my pocket, "I'm prepared to defend myself. They'd better let me alone."

"Hell's bells! throw it overboard, matey," said the Cap'n with a leer of contempt. "It's no good whatever at all."

He stopped me and whispered as he stood

squinting up at me. "I'll tell ye suthink — you take me up to your quarters an' I'll bell the reefs as good as I'm able — hope to die if I don't."

We were near my door and presently I paused with my hand upon the gate thinking that after all it could do no harm to admit him.

"I can't open my yawp here — it ain't saift," the Cap'n whispered as he looked up and down the street.

"Come in," I said as I swung the iron gate and mounted the steps.

"Very neat and tidy — I call it," said Rone when I had lighted the gas and drawn the window shades. "Now as to your sailink orders. I wouldn't have no gas here, pippin. Have it turned off o' this room. Candles is better — so I say. Number two: Be careful where ye go after dark. Don't study astronomy no more than what ye have to. One day they found a man under High Bridge. It looked as if he'd fell, so it did, an' no wonder beink as they found a letter in his pocket which said he was tired o' life. Now you'll think that was done very neat, Cappy, an' so it was but — Hell's bells! I've hearn o' things — say, one day a hoss run away an' smashed his owner. Now all they'd done in

the world was to sprinkle some dry mustard on the saddle blanket — so I've hearn — an' he was the Mayor of a big city. It's plum shameful an' no mistake. I don' know nothink at all 'cept what I've hearn, mind ye, an' that's come a long cruise, I dare presume to say, an' maybe it's all a lie, but step careful, pippin. Keep both feet on the ground an' when ye pick one up look where ye put it down, an' mind this: Yer in danger only when ye think yer saift, an' that's the God's truth."

The Cap'n paused to fill his pipe and I sat staring into his face and mentally feeling for bottom in this dark business.

"Now I'll p'int out the worst reefs in yer way, Cappy, if ye promise not t' breathe a word o' what I say or don't say, or neither o' what I've said a'ready which is no more'n right. Ye must keep as still as a bull bat or my ol' gizzerd 'll be tore out and flung in a basket an' me with my eyes open a seeink how it's done, which ain't no kind of a show fer a swell gent to see — is it now?"

I agreed with him and held up my right hand and took the oath that he demanded.

"Since ye left the Mug ye've cruised about in bad comp'ny, so ye have," he began again. "Better luff an' get before the wind. If ye do

that it may be — it just may be that ye'll see no more o' the war sign. Don't ye see, pippin, that when a gun is beink aimed at a bird he's very partic'lar bad comp'ny fer other birds an' no mistake."

I saw at once that this dark hint of his related to the shoemaker.

"I understand you," I said, "and I shall warn my friend." I raised my hand and added: "Of course, I shall be careful not to compromise you."

The Cap'n said nothing of my remark but looked into my eyes and added with a shrewd wink:

"You was to go into the eight' ward tomorrow night."

That struck me dumb. I had promised to go there and report a ball to be given by a certain politician of ill repute and how had he learned of it? I made no answer but the old ruffian had noted my surprise.

"Better go to bed, Cappy," he remarked as he emptied his pipe.

Rog Rone limped to the window and peered behind the shade and gave a low whistle.

"There's a little crack in the sky, shipmate. I must be off," he whispered as he left me and limped hurriedly down the stairs. I went with

him to the door and he asked me to look out and see if any one was in sight and I gazed up and down the street, which was still dark and deserted, and in half a moment I saw him disappearing in the gloom.

When I had gone to bed the rough, hairy old skipper haunted my thought and seemed to threaten me. Somehow this fond solicitude, this mawkish, bland benevolence fitted him very ill. Back of it all was some deep purpose — there could be no doubt of it — and I knew well that of all the knaves I had ever met he was the one to be watched. But I could not imagine what he was driving at.

CHAPTER VIII

Some men there are whose virtue issues from them with the noise of clanging gates; in others it dwells as silent as the maid who never stirs from home, but sits thoughtfully by the fireside, always ready to welcome those who enter from the cold without.

MAETERLINCK

I FOUND a rather painful surprise in certain morning newspapers. Under black-faced head-lines they alleged that Ben Lovel, hero of the Beasly School fire, and the lately elected president of the Mechanics' Union, had had a row with patrolman Conley at one o'clock in the morning over the arrest of a disreputable young woman of the Ninth Ward. In the midst of it another officer had arrested the young man. Conley alleged that Lovel had followed and finally assaulted him, and accused him of having an improper interest in the girl. The reporters had seen Lovel at the station house, but he would say nothing for publication.

I knew the heart of my friend, or thought I knew it. Its great kindness had brought his shame upon him. The unscrupulous pair

had blackened him in order to save themselves and be revenged for his interference. Without a moment's delay I hurried to Kerrigan Place, but the shop was locked. I returned at eight o'clock that evening and found Ben Lovel at his bench in the little shop. He looked up with a smile.

"My master!" he exclaimed, "I am glad to see you. To-night, to-night is our time. The Council meets. It will choose between peace and war. Wisdom and folly will strive together, and I hope — I believe it is the beginning of a great victory."

I held a newspaper in my hand and tried to speak, but he stopped me and went on.

"I have seen Horton. He has promised a million for our cause. He trusts my master, Condon."

"Have you seen the morning papers?" I asked.

"O, that is a little matter!" he exclaimed. "They have turned upon me like wolves, but, my dear Richard, I have had scarcely time to think of it."

"But — but I fear it will do you harm," I said. "One must look out for his reputation."

"It is good, but there is that which is better,"

said my friend as he sat down and went on with his task.

I looked at him in silence and divined his meaning.

"Some will despise me, but I cannot help it," he added; "some who are dear to me will turn away, but I put justice above them."

"I shall go and tell what I know about it," I said.

"No; I see my way clearly and you can give me no help. Hold your peace if you are my friend. The girl will stand with the officer — she cannot help it. They will cover me with shame but, by and by, they will open their mouths with astonishment."

I stood looking at him.

"It would serve no purpose, and then there are Mr. Horton and the young lady," he added. "They will think ill of you."

I looked into the calm, gentle face of my friend and felt like a sparrow addressing a swan.

"I shall be proud of your friendship, always," I said to him. "If I can help you I must, whatever happens."

"I am of small account," he answered.

"I am thinking of my many brothers in the wide world, and I tell you the millionaire is fond of my master, Condon."

"Why do you think that?"

"Else, it appears to me, he would not have promised so large a sum to the order. We owe much to the book, my master. It is better than a host in arms. It has converted some of the greatest captains in the army of Discontent. Aided by the authority of Condon, it has turned many from war to peace and will turn many more. Letters are coming from all parts of the earth, and they say: 'You have convinced me. Let us hear no more of war.'"

"One thing I wish to speak about — I have reason to think that your life is in great danger. Don't go out unless some one is with you." I cautioned.

"What of Rone?" he asked.

"I have seen him but once since leaving the Mug."

"We both have cause to fear him," said Lovel.

A quarter of an hour had not passed before my ear caught the familiar cane-tap of the Cap'n coming nearer on the avenue, beyond Kerrigan Place. We sat listening in silence

while it passed the shop. Presently it ceased and we heard the clanking latch of the door of the Lanthorne.

"He has entered the inn," Lovel whispered.

I was weary and in need of sleep, and he saw it.

"Go into my little room and lie down and rest yourself," he said. "I have business on my hands and may presently need your help."

I fell asleep soon and was aroused by footsteps on the stairs and the opening of the outer door. I heard the low, deep voice of Condon and another which was new to me. Then the voice of Lovel saying:

"Sit down — my masters."

"Let us proceed to business," said Condon.

"Yes," Lovel answered, "we have much work to do."

"Well, I'm going to listen and hold my peace," said Condon. "You've got my hands tied. I'm only looking for arguments."

"I'm in favour of war because I do not see how we can dodge it," said the voice of the stranger. "The preparations are made."

"Well, suppose we call a great convention of the order," Lovel began. "Let us say

that it is to assemble in the city of London. Every man is to carry in his pockets a specially made rifle consisting of twenty pieces, and forty rounds of ammunition under a false bottom in his trunk. There are a hundred thousand of our men in the army of Great Britain and many more in its workshops — men who will turn to us, it may be, in the hour of our need. At a certain time of the day of assembly the best ships in the British navy are destroyed. In the midst of the excitement that follows your war begins. Suddenly a great army has possession of the streets and has begun its work of destruction — —"

The voice of the stranger interrupted him saying:

"My God, man! where did you hear of that?"

"Oh, I'm only supposing," Lovel went on. "It's one of many plans which come to my mind and I doubt if you could make a better one, and yet it is worthless."

"Why?" the stranger asked.

"Because if you divide a secret among many it is no longer a secret. The chain is no stronger than its weakest link. It will break and crush you. Some one or more of them will turn honest and that will overthrow

you. But suppose the chain holds — you would be found out."

"Why?"

"Because the eyes of all good men have the power to behold evil though it be hidden. The eyes of men are never satisfied but are ever trying the hearts of their brothers, with a wondrous gift. Have you never been astonished by them?"

"God knows I have," said Condon.

"But suppose you elude all vigilance and the chain holds and you take the city," Lovel went on. "Do you believe in the justice of God and the teaching of our Great Master Jesus?"

"I do, but what has that to do with it?"

"Fool! You cannot serve two masters," said the young man with feeling. "You must either abandon your God or your war — there is no middle ground."

"But is not our cause just?" the stranger queried.

"Aye, suppose it be so — still if you go to war you blacken it with injustice far greater than that of which you complain. And your God becomes a name only and your religion a jest and your souls return to pagan darkness. For suppose, having succeeded thus far you

set out to conquer the world. Now, whatever your lips may say, this will be the prayer of your hearts every morning:

> O God! help us this day to forget Thy commandments. Help us to hate our brothers and to slay them with the sword and to ravage their houses and lay waste their fields. Help us to deceive them with our spies and our stratagems so that when we fall upon them at last we shall smite every horse with astonishment and his rider with madness and make them an easy prey. Thou hast said that we shall not steal, but O God! help us this day to lay hold of their treasure and make it our own. Help us to fill every heart with despair and every house with mourning. Help us this day to heed not the cry of child or woman or stricken warrior but help us rather to delight in sorrow and death and all evil. And this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"Now, my masters, do you not see that your purpose cannot endure this test, that you have forfeited all right to prayer and to divine aid and mercy when you go into battle?"

An impressive silence followed. Then a stir and the voice of Condon saying:

"Let us go."

The two went away and Lovel came into the bedroom with his candle.

"I did not expect them," said he, "but seeing them here I threw my last stone. I could not help it for I shall have no other chance to talk with them. You have heard all, but no matter. There is nothing more to be done."

In that hour I had begun to know him.

CHAPTER IX

Thousands and thousands of things quiver in silence on the lips of true friendship and love that are not to be found in the silence of other lips to which friendship and love are unknown. MAETERLINCK

IT WILL be remembered that next day Darklight was to make history, and therein he achieved signal and unexpected success upon my person, but not otherwise. I went to Pier No. 5, at the hour appointed. Pipps, Higgins, and Darklight stood waiting for me. The latter betrayed signs of deep excitement. He called us close together and whispered mysteriously.

"Separate, and make for the Staten Island ferry house. I'm afraid of being watched and followed."

He displayed and flaunted his mystery before us with a keen delight in it.

"Give us some idea of the nature of the crime," Pipps urged.

"It's innocent enough," said Darklight. "I'm only afraid of the other papers. You'll see a great act. A multi-millionaire will be there and if he likes the show my fortune is made."

We separated and went by diverse routes to the ferry. To my great surprise I found Mr. Horton and his daughter in the waiting-room.

The great man clapped me on the shoulder and said laughingly:

"Glad to see you, my boy! I understood that you were going and thought I would bring Miss Ruth. She has an eye for history and I believe that we are to see the making of a bit of it; you must help me to look out for her, and remember," he added with a smile, "I'm not to let her go falling in love."

"I'll be a stern deputy," I promised as we went aboard.

I sat down with the young lady, while her father stood on the open deck with my friends. Suddenly, I knew that she was aware of my secret — it may have been her eyes that told me. Then I confessed:

"I have so much to say, and there is so little that I can say."

"I know," she answered quickly; "but let us use words for politeness, and the state of the weather, and all that little business."

"And say the best truth in silence?" I queried.

"And wrap ourselves in mystery and see

if we can solve the riddle. We shall be like a book that is half read."

"Do you know what I am saying to you now?" I asked.

She looked into my eyes and I remember as if it were a thing of to-day just what her own said to me, but she only nodded, and then I thought her beautiful.

"I warn you, that a woman is no easy riddle," she remarked. "You may be far from the truth when you feel sure that you know her. She is lucky if she knows herself."

"It's a pretty mystery," I said. "Men are not so difficult."

"They are like the riddle of the Sphinx," she answered with a laugh. "I cannot make them out. Think of your friend Lovel, whose face and music would remind you of paradise. But I fear he's a very common fellow."

I promptly took his part and told, as best I could, how his shame had come upon him, and how far he stood above it.

"I am glad you told me," she said rather solemnly. "He is brave — he is not like other men — like most other men."

"I only know that he is far above *me*," was my confession. "I am better for having

known the boy but — but I cannot follow him. He is on different ground, somehow."

"Would you have done what he did?"

"Not yesterday, but to-day — since my talk with him I would do it. He gave me some of his courage."

"I wish that I could know him better, but now — I fear it is impossible," she said with regret in her eyes. "My friends are so conventional, and perhaps they are right. Who is he and where does he come from, and how does it happen that he's a shoemaker?"

"I do not know; he never speaks of his past."

"Strange — isn't it!" said she. "My father doesn't like that trait in him. Why should he make a mystery of his past? One cannot help thinking that it may be very bad."

"At first I wondered, then I began to understand," was my answer. "There's one man he never speaks of, and I am sure he never thinks of him — that's Ben Lovel. It's a part of his scheme of life, to forget himself."

The boat had landed and we all went ashore and followed Darklight. By train and carriage we came, by and by, to the top of a lonely hill where two men awaited us, one

with a tripod and camera. On the ground near them were a couple of big long boxes.

Darklight jumped from the carriage and approached the waiting pair.

"Professor, I am glad to see you," he said to one of the men who had been awaiting us. "Are you ready."

"All ready."

"Then open the boxes and we will set up the machine."

As they broke the boxes, Darklight called Pipps, Higgins and myself together and whispered:

"It's Morgenthal's flyer!"

His chin trembled. He gave us an impressive look and added: "The greatest invention of the century!"

He paused again as if to give us time to recover, and went on: "I propose to form a company, and Horton and other rich men are going to back it. This man will operate the machine. He's an equilibrist and high diver from Barnum's show. I am to have the first story of it published in America, with the pictures of the professor in flight. How's that, for a sensation? The paper has paid five thousand dollars to get it."

We removed many rods of bamboo with

bolts and clamps from the boxes, and Darklight, who consulted a printed sheet of directions, told us what to do. In half an hour two frames of bamboo covered with silk lay stretched before us, like the wings of a great bird, over a span of some forty feet. They were soon connected with rods and Darklight showed us how the operator, standing between them, inserted an arm to the shoulder in each wing, and seized a pair of handles. There were pasters on the wood-work of the machine, printed in German, which said, substantially:

"This machine is dangerous — very dangerous. Do not try to fly it in a wind."

Of the historic event promised there is little to be recorded, save my own part in it. The Professor began his experiments in a gingerly fashion, having been alarmed by the warnings. He took his place in the body of the flyer and raised its wings and stood still, but nothing happened. He gently waved both wings but the soft breeze which blew up the hillside failed to accept his challenge. He walked down the slope a few steps and still nothing came of it. He ran a little, and Pipps hurled a jest at him, and we all laughed. The Professor grew brave and ran up and down the hillside with wings in the air and his feet

always on the ground. We turned upon Darklight, who stood by the camera, and gave him a volley of ridicule. He made no reply but hurried to the Professor with new suggestions. They were tried, with no better luck. The Professor saw that he was only making fun for us and crawled out of the flyer.

"It's a bloomin' fake!" he exclaimed as he joined us.

Darklight's maker of history lay deserted in the grass and all had a word of contempt for it. We began to laugh again, for Higgins had taken the place of the athlete.

Our friend and clubmate, Mr. Solomon Higgins, had one dimension so salient and incisive that it entered his name, and the reflections of all who knew him. On Park Row, from Broadway to the Bridge, he was "Lengthy" Higgins. He had legs of unusual length and the thickness of his thigh would scarcely have exceeded the diameter of a teacup. He wore big, round spectacles, and rode across the Bridge every morning on a great, creaking bicycle propelled by straps and levers. He was a man of ingenuity, whose words were assisted by real insight and a solemn countenance.

He had carefully examined the machine

and now stood like a heron alighting, with wings out. He ran a few steps down the hillside.

"Boys, I believe I can fly her like a kite," said he. "Can you get me a rope?"

Darklight raced away in a carriage and returned, by and by, with the rope desired. Higgins made it fast to a strong bar of bamboo between the two wings. Then he took his place *in medias res* and put on the machine. He stood with his arms under the wings, and said to us:

"You fellows, run down hill with the rope and I'll follow. If she flies, hang on and don't let me go more than four or five feet from the ground."

We took hold and ran ahead of our slim friend down the slope. There were three or four ineffective trials of this sort and then confusion. Mr. Higgins was going at top speed down the hill, as we ran ahead of him, all hands pulling on the rope. It was a hundred feet long, and I clung near the end of it. Suddenly we met a vagrant puff of wind. Like a mad bull it tossed the machine. The rope flashed through our hands and felt like hot iron. The heels of Mr. Higgins came together with a loud whack above our heads.

In a twinkling man and machine had plunged some two hundred feet into the air. It was like magic. I had not seen them move. They had been here, and, presto! they were there. The others had let go and a knot in the rope's end had struck my blistered hands. I held on for the sake of poor Higgins, and up I went in a long curve like the snapper on a whip-lash. Far above me I could see Mr. Higgins, hurtling and curvetting about, his long legs whipping hither and thither, his big, round spectacles glowing at every turn. It produced an odd delusion. His movements were so swift that he seemed to be as long as the rope I clung to. He moved in swoops and swirls, and drops and long upward leaps. I got a bight of the rope's end on my wrist and circled and swung and dared not release my hold. How I managed to keep it is more than I can say, although others have told me it was only for a matter of some three or four seconds. I saw Mr. Higgins swoop down and flash up and whirl half over and come fluttering toward the earth. Then I felt myself hit the ground and the rope came pouring down upon me. I heard voices, and one, the sweetness of whose word and tone I have not yet forgotten, but they were faint

and broken like sounds that have come far in a wind.

"Is this the earth?" I heard Higgins ask, and then say: "I'll never jump off it again. If any of you want to be an angel, here's your chance. I don't need any more practice."

Then their voices grew faint and stopped suddenly. I came to in a moment, with Ruth Horton bending over me and rubbing my brow with her hand. She said not a word for half a moment, but a tear fell from her cheek upon mine, and helped me to understand her. It was far more to me than anything she had said, or could say.

They took me to a hospital where a surgeon found a few broken bones in me, and where Miss Horton and her father came every day with cheering words and faces.

"I don't think much of that machine," said Mr. Horton next day. "The subject of rapid transit to the undiscovered country is not worth investigating. I loaned a few hundred dollars to your friend, but refused to take any stock in the company. My afternoon was not wasted, for we were both pleased with the demonstration of *you*. I am glad to help any enterprise that is likely

to help mankind, and Holm, I wouldn't mind taking a little stock in *you*. Would you like the railroad business?"

"Of course you would like it," said Ruth playfully.

"And I will, if it is your wish," I said.

"I believe you're a good business venture," Mr. Horton added; "and, boy, I'm going to satisfy myself about it. I believe there's something in you."

His daughter left us and then he added:

"The girl likes you, but you mustn't count on that, boy. You have too many rivals and she's already lost her heart, I believe. My wife has plans for her."

I got his meaning and came to know this — by putting two and two together, no doubt — that Mrs. Horton did not know the name of the sick man whom her daughter visited. So, with the help of that and my unrewarded visits to the Horton home, I saw clearly that the man and wife were not of a like mind about me.

I had written to Lovel explaining my failure to meet him, and the letter quickly brought my friend. It was a pleasant and wonderful thing — the way he put his hand upon my head, the look of his face, and the sound of

his greeting. The tenderness of it all went to my heart, and I did not know until then how dear he was to me. Ruth Horton had brought flowers and was decorating the room. For a moment he seemed not to see her. As he turned from me she offered him her hand and he took it and said:

"I have been condemned by the law and punished, and you — you seem not to despise me."

"I know the truth about you and how good and brave you have been," she answered.

"Think not of me but of the girl, who is as one brought back to life. I remember well the words of our Great Master, Jesus, and I shall deliver her into His fold."

In the brief silence that followed, suggestions of new trouble crowded into my thoughts.

"As to myself," he added, "do not expect that I shall cease to know trouble. I see my way and it leads not to peace."

With that he left us.

"Wonderful!" said Miss Horton as soon as he was gone. "I could almost love a man like that. He reminds me of the text yesterday: 'His eyes shall be as the noonday; he shall shine forth like the morning.'"

"If any man deserves the love of so dear a woman, it is he," I said with a pang that I had to confess it.

"But I love him not as the world loves." she said.

CHAPTER X

THIS matter of recalling my past is like looking from a mountain-top into a great valley through which I have made my way. I see where I wandered and was lost; I see vast shadows and broad, sunlit spaces, and people moving here and there. I liken those days in bed — painful as they were — to the sunlit spaces, remembering how they were lighted with thoughts better than I and as noble, I dare hope, as had been the kindness of my friends. Among these, I count the book which I had re-read in the light of my newer knowledge.

My bones were healed, and I had returned to my lodgings when Lovel came again.

"My master, forgive me," he said, "I have had many tasks. I have mended forty pairs of shoes and the hearts of sundry poor fellows and have left you to the doctors and the sweet young lady."

"And the book — the wonderful book," I said. "It has been like a wise father to me."

"We shall see Condon to-night," he said

with a look of joy. "The Council is for peace. The Napoleon has had a battle and remains emperor. There are some who cannot be reconciled. They are like scattered sheep without a shepherd. Perhaps you could go."

His face brightened when I said that I should be glad to go.

"Much has happened since you were shut away from us," he went on. "My master, Condon, has been named for Congress and will be elected, let us hope. He has put his hand to the plough and cannot turn back."

I had not fully got his meaning when he stood that day, looking down at me, his face full of enthusiasm. But I had often to be content with a partial understanding of his words.

"We will go first and honour the great man," he said as he led me out of the little shop. "Come, you shall see the ways of pleasantness."

We walked to one of the large hotels, where "our master, Condon," was being received by the President, the mayor, and other distinguished men. We joined the many who wished to shake his hand and assure him of their debt. Some I saw who called him brother and spoke to him lovingly as one

addresses a dear friend, and yet I knew that they had never seen him before then. It reminded me of that line of Whitman's:

"Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?"

It was a great thing to have warmed the heart of the world and have inspired for one's self its grateful prayer and affection; to have made millions of brothers with one little book. I spoke of that when we had left and were walking away together, but he made no answer and I knew that he was thinking of some greater thing. We went to the Lanthorne for a bite of supper, and at eleven o'clock were on our way to the Council chamber of the Centre Link of the Toilers' Chain.

It was a place of many perils which we found in the deep of the night, and for both of us it was like the valley of the shadow of death. We had crossed the river, as before, and tramped a mile or so in dark streets when a deep voice halted us. It was that of Condon himself, who came out of the darkness behind and took the arm of my friend.

"I have been watching for you," said he in a low tone. "Why don't you take my advice, and a cab? You need only tell them to charge the bill to me."

"Did you not know that I am a cobbler?" my friend answered.

"It makes no difference," said Condon with a note of impatience in his tone.

"Then you do not know why I am a cobbler," Ben Lovel said.

"You are a bit of a crank," Condon whispered rather sternly. "Remember now, you will go when I hold my handkerchief in my left hand; there will be a cab at the door."

"Follow close behind us," he commanded me as he entered the dark hall with his arm in Lovel's.

I did as he bade me and was soon in the gloomy chamber in which nearly three months before delegates from many races and capitals had sat together. Condon walked down the aisle and took his place at the table where, as before, I saw a number of lighted candles. We sat on a bench near him. The room was crowded. Condon tapped with his gavel and called for the minutes, which were read. Reports of officers and committees followed and presently, the Napoleon rose and said:

"Our full Council held its last meeting of the year on Wednesday night, and its members have returned to their homes. It is my duty to inform you that it has decided once and for

all an important question of policy. We shall seek to achieve our ends by making and not by breaking laws."

A murmur of disapproval began near us and spread through the room. A resounding thump of his gavel, and the speaker continued in a voice of such authority that order was at once restored. "Silence, men, while you hear my report. I beg to remind you that in all matters you have sworn to accept the judgment of your Council. It is final, and while I have not always agreed with it, there has been never a time when I would not sooner have lost my head than show by the slightest word or deed that I had not the fullest possible respect for it. If we lose that we have lost all. Listen, while I inform you of its plan. A committee has been appointed for every land in which we have a Link. This committee will try to get the legislation we need. It will seek to break down the walls of prejudice and bring rich and poor, noble and peasant, into closer and more sympathetic relations. A fund of one million dollars will be distributed among these committees for the furtherance of our work."

The Napoleon was interrupted by cheers and hisses. Again his masterly eye and voice

awed the unsatisfied in the army of discontent. Well they knew what thunderbolts had fallen from his hand! In half a moment all were looking up at him in deep silence.

"It is a pleasure to be able to tell you," he went on, "that our work for a fairer distribution of the world's wealth is progressing beyond my hopes. You will agree with me that nothing we do or say should interrupt it. I have learned that many rich men have only to be convinced of our honour and good will to join, heart and purse, in our efforts. When I tell you that five of them have pledged fifty thousand each for the support of the unemployed and the education of the children of the poor in all countries, you will understand the action of our Council. I believe that we may safely expect a fund of ten million dollars. I have been invited to visit England, France, Austria, Italy, and Germany. I have had letters from wealthy and distinguished men — statesmen, bankers, bishops of the church, cabinet ministers, and noblemen — who wish to help our cause. Within a month I shall begin my work among them. The ear of the world is turned to us and the heart of the world is ready for our appeal. Why go to war when peace will serve us better?

I have been miscalled the Napoleon of Discontent. I disclaim the title. I am no lover of war. I favoured it when it seemed to be our only recourse. Let us have peace. It is not revenge, but justice that we desire."

There were more cheers than before, but the hisses were many and persistent. Condon calmly resumed his chair and beckoned to Lovel who went to his side. All eyes were turned upon them, and I could hear only smothered murmurs of discontent. I studied the face of the masterful captain. I fancied that I saw in it subtle suggestions of the greatness which had filled and inspired his book. At least the strength and the calm dignity of its appeal were there, and what a wonderful thing the book had done for him and the brotherhood of the Chain! I had not until then quite comprehended the power of it. Those enlightened pages had gone to the ends of the earth, and proved the sincerity and wisdom of the captain. They had convinced all as they had convinced me. They had given him the respect and confidence of the very men that he most desired to reach. They had caught the ear of the world. It could not be that this great man had had the least part in those dark and cunning deeds of

which Lovel had secretly informed me. If so, he must have turned from his sin, as Paul had done, and received the gift of prophecy.

My reflections were stopped by Lovel, who had begun to speak. I shall not try to repeat his words, for the splendour of his face and a power, not in their sound or meaning, as I think of them, fell upon us and silenced every murmur. They pleaded for peace and the end of violence and evil passion; they pictured the growing strength of the Chain, with leaders in the halls of legislation and the councils of the State and the confidence of the rich and powerful. He spoke for the rich man whose lack of charity was no greater than that with which he was regarded. He was interrupted by hisses and sat down.

His speech had made its point. I had seen its effect in the faces of the men around me. I have thought sometimes that the radical wing would have gone with its wiser brothers but for the malice of one man — a tall, full-bearded Bavarian peasant, of a bitter soul and the gift of eloquence — one of those soon to win infamy and death in the Haymarket riot in Chicago. He rose and began a protest full of the worst feeling:

"They tell us that peace is better than

revenge," he shouted with the accent of a German who has not fully mastered his English. "That we should lie down with the lion who has rent our flesh, and put away the thirst for his blood which came of our fathers. I say that our desire for revenge is righteous and God-given. It calls for blood and that only will erase our wrongs. What says the Lord of Hosts in the lips of his prophet Samuel? These are the words:

> "'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt.
>
> "'Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.'

"And Saul destroyed the doomed people but spared Agag their king and the Lord repented that he had given his work to Saul on account of his softness and the prophet spoke this command to him: 'Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.' And Agag came unto him delicately and said: 'Surely the bitterness of death is passed.' And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. So says the holy record."

It may seem strange to my reader, as it did to me, that the Bible should have had so much authority with those rough and bitter men. Murmurs of approval arose and grew and continued. The speaker was interrupted by them and paused, and presently went on.

"So said and did the judge of all the world. Perhaps we may respect His teaching, as well as that of our gentle Napoleon."

The crowd went with him in a burst of laughter and applause.

In a voice shrill and quivering with excitement, he asked why their captain, like Saul, had dallied in the work of his Master. In a few weeks he had become a friend of the rich and, possibly, rich himself. Had Agag addressed him delicately and persuaded him that the bitterness of death was passed? Since he had begun "to suck the drugs of opulence" he had acquired the mildness of a dove. He suspected that the shoemaker who had been preaching peace, until they were all weary of his folly, had at last converted him.

"I charge the shoemaker with being a spy in the pay of the aristocrats," the speaker went on. "I have proof that he is a rich man; that his shop and cobbling are only a cloak for his villainy; that by cunning he has

learned of our secret work and told certain of his friends about it. I tell you that I have the proof of this in my pocket."

There were loud cries and hisses on every side, and two or three shouted: "Down with the shoemaker!"

"We have been duped but we are not yet defeated," said the speaker, and was halted by applause. As he waited in silence I saw him cross his heart with his right forefinger. A whispered exclamation came from Lovel.

Condon had sat calmly reading a report. He rose and rapped with his gavel, and said quietly, as if it were all a matter of slight importance, "My brother will please take his seat and come to my office to-morrow at ten. There will be no more seditious talk in any meeting of the Chain. I should like to confer with Brothers Rone, Mitchell, Matlofsky and Cantaverro after the meeting in this room. The secretary will read to all a piece of astonishing news after which a motion to adjourn will be in order."

He removed his handkerchief and held it in his left hand. Lovel rose and started through the aisle, and I followed him. The secretary began to talk of the remarkable letter which he was about to read. I know

now that it was done to hold the crowd in their seats.

The Napoleon had prevailed. Their hearts had failed them when they heard his voice. There was no sound of disorder in any part of the room; but the seeds of trouble had been scattered and could not be recalled. Many scanned the face of my friend with curious interest as we passed them. We hurried up the stairs and down to the outer door and into the cab, which awaited us.

"To Kerrigan Place!" I shouted and away we went at a gallop. Neither spoke until our carriage stopped in the ferry house. Then Lovel whispered:

"They have marked me for death. Did you see him cross his heart?"

"Yes."

"That is the sign and a dozen answered it. The change came too quickly. Blood must pay for our victory, and perhaps mine will be enough. I hope it may be so."

He leaned back on the cushions and spoke calmly of his peril, and like one who is weary after his work is done.

"Let us leave the city and escape them," I suggested, in no way surprised by what he had said to me.

"But they are cunning, and in many places, and will know the way we take. The fury of a false god is in them. But think of what we have done, dear Richard, and be glad with me. My master, Condon, leads a mighty host. The light shines upon his way. The words of his mouth were more than food to me. I am a little creature — the least of them all."

And the greatest, I was about to say, but held my peace, knowing him as I did. The thought of his peril haunted me.

"I do not think they will dare molest you," I said. "Condon will keep them in hand."

He made no answer and I added:

"It surprised me that the man dared be so frank in the presence of the captain."

"The time has come when they can provoke him and be secure, and they know it," said my friend.

"Do you think he recognized the sign?"

"He would not know the sign."

"We must see and tell him at once."

"They think me a rich man and a spy," said Lovel. "It is because they have read and failed to understand the letter stolen by Rone. You will remember that I warned you of Rone — that he worked in the darkness and delighted in evil deeds. You moved and

kept out of his way and purged yourself of the war sign. So they judge me a spy and the foe of my brothers."

Little more was said until we got to Kerrigan Place, where I entered his shop with the shoemaker and remained with him until morning.

At daylight, Condon came in a carriage and bade us go with him.

"You will leave the shop for a few days and live in a house near me," he said to Lovel. "Do as I tell you and stay in for a week or so. Sores have a way of healing; with proper treatment they will disappear, and you may soon do as you please."

"You would best look out for yourself," said Lovel.

"Oh, I musn't show any fear!" he answered in a tone of indifference. "You know, I've got to keep the others afraid."

I looked at these two masterful men who sat with me, the one frail as wax, the other strong as iron; and yet the wax had bent the iron.

I rode with them to Lovel's lodgings. The Napoleon asked where I wished to go, and drove me to the place without a word until I was getting out.

"Keep away from there until I see you again," he said, as I bade him good morning.

CHAPTER XI

TWO weeks had gone and Lovel had returned to his shop. He had met some of the radicals, and Condon assured me that the time of peril had passed. Quite another matter had begun to worry my friend. The young woman, for whose sake he had suffered a fine and a public reprimand and some evil fame, was heaping trouble on him. He had dreamed of leading her, and others like her, into the way of peace. But it became the way of strife at its very entrance. No decent home was open to her and, as I foresaw, the churches could give him little help. He found there phrases of good will and offers of money, but none wished to touch her hand, even. He searched vainly, as he thought, for the spirit of his Great Master, Jesus, who was wont to treat the women of her kind with peculiar tenderness. Ministers sent him to a place set apart for evil doers. He had found one offer of Christian fellowship in a post of the Salvation Army, and had accepted the same. For the first

time I had seen his face clouded with indignation.

"It burns me like a fire," he said in speaking of his trouble. "How may we help these little people, who behave themselves proudly and worship the work of their hands and take no thought of their brothers! I know a place, far from here, where my Great Master dwells. I wish that I might take her there. But I shall send her back to the sea, on which she was born, with her mother. They shall have honest work to do."

That was all that he said to me of the whole matter. His pity overcame his indignation, for every man was his brother — even the basest.

Where was the land he knew in which the Great Master dwelt? The scene of his childhood, perhaps, for that may have "a charm from the skies," although I have never felt the like myself. He said not a word to enlighten me and long since I had ceased to question him in relation to his own history.

I was working these days to pay for my illness and with so much to do that I had even denied myself the pleasure of a night with my friends at the Lanthorne since my recovery. I had heard no more from Horton regarding his will to try me and was losing

hope of it, when a note come one day inviting me to his home. I was to be there at nine o'clock that evening. When I called, the butler took me to the playroom of the millionaire above stairs, where he loved to sit with his intimates. It contained a billiard and card table, and there were easy chairs and a sofa before an open fireplace. The walls were covered with old tapestries. Horton was fond of cards, and I had heard that the price of a railroad had been known to cross his table in the course of a night's play. He met me at the door.

"Hello, my boy!" he exclaimed with a hearty shake of my hand. "You've got your feet on the ground again—now keep 'em there. Sit down here and smoke a cigar with me."

I sat on the sofa, at his side, before the fire.

"You think you'd like the railroad business — do you?" he asked.

"I do," was my answer.

"Then, there's another problem — is it going to like you? — and the boss will have to answer that question. It's harder than sawing wood. I want you to begin at the bottom, at ten dollars a week, and take your chances under a boss."

I think that he was feeling to see if I had the

right stuff in me, and I was quick to say that hard work and small pay would not turn me aside. My answer pleased him.

"If you do your part, I'll do mine," he said, "and mine will be to try to make you happy. Report at my office Monday morning, at nine, and we'll take the ten o'clock train for the shops. I'll keep my eye on you."

He told me of his early hardships and how he had won promotion and the good will of his boss.

Presently, his daughter ran in upon us.

"Mother has asked me to bring Mr. Holm!" she exclaimed merrily. "I can't let you have him any longer."

"He is yours," said her father, with a wink at me. "These women are sly people; I didn't suppose that either of them would suspect you were here."

"We didn't suspect — we knew," she said with a laugh. "I knew and told her and learned that she knew. Don't imagine you can fool us; we've a splendid secret service here. You must come down; you must see mother, and the scion."

"The dear old girl!" said Mr. Horton with a laugh; "I'll go along and have a look at the fun."

"She will ask you to dinner," the girl whispered as we descended the great stairs. "You simply must say yes. Remember you are as clay in the hands of the potter."

Mrs. Horton was one of those whom Lovel had condemned in his odd, archaic phrases. She "behaved herself proudly," and had the manners and jewels of a queen. I heard her address many, including myself, in a tone of pity. Often her eye seemed to say, "My poor little man! There, take my hand — one has to be generous. Do not stand too long in front of me."

Her manner bestowed grace, mercy and condemnation as she received her guests. Now and then her eyes seemed to say: "Off goes her head," or "Let her live and we will see how the poor wretch behaves."

"The scion" stood beside her — a handsome French youth who was said to be a great-grandson of one of the Bonapartes. He smiled, and shook hands with her guests, but said nothing. When all were presented a group of young ladies gathered about "the scion."

"A story! tell us a story," one begged, and soon they led him away.

Miss Horton took me back to her mother.

"We want you to dine with us Sunday evening, at half-past seven," said the *grande dame*, and her face added: "You will not care to come and, of course, you will say no."

But I was not to be turned aside. I promptly said that I should be glad to come.

Then she exclaimed: "How good of you!" and put a sentence of death in her cold smile.

Miss Horton took my arm and led me into the library.

"Don't you feel like sitting down by the fire?" she asked.

"No, thank you," I answered gravely.

"I want to present you to some of my friends, and you must know the prince. He's a raiser of Pomeranian poodles." She laughed and added: "It's inspiring to hear him talk about poodles."

We found the Frenchman, presently, in the midst of a number of young ladies. Miss Horton presented me to the group, and I took my seat by the noble foreigner. He was a young man of about twenty-three, large-boned and broad-shouldered, and I thought him a fine figure of a man. To my surprise, however, he addressed me in a thin, treble voice, and delicately felt his

hair, which was thick and curly and so long that it swept the collar of his coat. He had well-cut features, pink cheeks, and a skin as white as a woman's. He was clearly a favourite of the young ladies, who listened with delight to his tales of court life in the capitals of Europe, and laughed at his clever mimicry of an aged and eccentric queen.

Miss Horton came presently and said that before I should go her father would like a word with me. I thought that I must be going, and we returned to his room together.

"What did you think of the prince?" she asked.

"A beautiful man!" I said.

"Almost queenly," she suggested as we entered her father's door. "Was there ever such an imitator of women?"

"And such a judge of poodles," said the millionaire. "I venture to say that his father before him was a raiser of poodles with pedigrees as long as his own. It's wonderful!"

"You're a disgrace to the family with your talk," said the young lady as she playfully shook his shoulder, and bade me good night.

"Boy, I want to save you from needless embarrassment," said Israel Horton, as he

stood before me. "You have now a fairly good view of the situation. Think it over. If it should seem too discouraging, why, you can back out. I know it's a good deal of a contract, and if you don't show up on Monday I shall not blame you a bit."

"I shall be with you if I am able to walk," I assured him.

"Put love out of your mind and go to work," he said. "Just consider that the marriage you spoke of is impossible, and think only of what you have to do. It may be you'll make yourself worthy of the best girl in the world, when you find her."

He turned away, and I left his house, full of doubts and fears.

CHAPTER XII

AT LEAST once a day I called at the shop of the shoemaker. I went in the evening when my work would let me and talked for an hour or so with my friend. Those nights, when at home, he barred his door and did without lights — and we both had a dread of the dark. His unreconciled brothers had neither raised a finger nor shown a face, to Lovel or me. But while my friend had no fear he seemed to have no sense of security. He had asked me to tap on the window-pane instead of the door when I came after dark.

Saturday had come and we were to while away its end at the Lanthorne. That morning, before I was out of bed, a servant came to my door.

"Please, sir," he said, "Mr. J. Millerton Crabtree is waiting in the parlour."

I had almost forgotten Mr. J. Millerton Crabtree — the trance poet and describer of human wonders and curiosities — and of my promise to try to find a publisher for

his verse. I made haste to greet him and present my excuses. He began with a proud sneer:

"I have an imitator — a base upstart, who is introducing curiosities in a rival house with the aid of poetry." He added, impressively, as if it were a piece of impudence unequalled in a generation: "He has copied my reversible poem, word for word."

I regarded him with silent pity.

"If I could only find a publisher," he went on, "and reap the fame that belongs to me as a lecturer and a poet, it would, as it were,

> "Glue my fame to my name
> And stop my rival's cunning game.

"You see how natural it flows from me? I can sometimes carry on a whole conversation in poetry, as my daughter says. What I want, sir, is to 'glue my fame to my name.'"

"Glue it!" I said; "yes, your fame should be bound and welded to the name of Crabtree, so that the hand of envy cannot tear it away. I will do what I can at once, this very day, even."

"A thousand thanks!" he exclaimed with a stage bow, and added: "Would you have the kindness and condescension to see me

to-night? Could I come here after the last performance of our great congress of curiosities — for two minutes, only?"

I should have to see him that evening, if at all, for next day I was going out of town and would be leaving with Horton early Monday, so I said to Mr. Crabtree that I would see him at the Lanthorne, at midnight, and for that assurance he gave me a grand bow and another "thousand thanks," and relieved me of his presence.

Our Sunday editor ordered a long sketch of "the bard" with a full exhibit of his poetry, and that evening I went to the School for Novelists with the sketch in my pocket.

Lovel was there, and every chair at the big table was occupied. The smooth, round face of Colonel Christmas shone with good nature.

"Kind sirs, it is a time for reflection," said he as he opened the school. "We have eaten, drunk, and been merry, with never a thought of our worthy host who might, for all we knew, have fasted, famished and grown sad. The noble arts of poetry and romance have devoured his substance until he calls for relief. The time has come, gentlemen, when the look of our

money would be more welcome to this patient man than the sound of our eloquence. Hereafter we must pay as we feast. It gives me pleasure to inform you that a friend of the School for Novelists, whose name I am not at liberty to mention, has promised the sum of three hundred dollars for the liquidation of our debt. He offers a prize, also, of five hundred dollars for the best type of character which any member of the school may imagine, and clearly describe, in the next year, and I am glad to announce that the judge is to be our able and highly esteemed friend, Mr. Ben Lovel.

"In connection with these noble gifts, he asks that I make a suggestion, namely, that the limit of wine for each plate, at any dinner, be two glasses. You see before you a man chastened by many follies and ready for wiser conduct."

Loud applause greeted the Colonel as he took his seat, and Darklight proposed three cheers for the unknown friend, which were promptly given. A motion followed the cheers and was carried with a noisy chorus of agreement.

Somehow the suspicion came to me, and more than once I have wondered why, that

Lovel was "the unknown friend." Was it possible that the charge I had listened to in the chamber of the Centre Link was in part true? Was Lovel a rich man, and had he become a cobbler that he might know the toil and the lowly life of the poor? Once before a like query had come to me, but now its tone was a little more confident.

Tales were read by Pipps and Darklight, and the discussion carried us to the stroke of twelve. Lovel and I left the table, and were emerging under the old Lanthorne when the trance poet intercepted us. I had forgotten my promise, and suggested that I should go back into the tap-room and let him read my sketch.

"It would be better to take him over to my shop," said the shoemaker, and thither we proceeded.

We climbed the stairs and entered the small room, now dark as a pocket. Lovel led us into the chamber where he slept. Below we could hear our host and our friends talking loudly, as they closed the door of the Lanthorne and walked out of Kerrigan Place. Lovel was feeling for matches, and quickly stopped and stood motionless.

Then a whispered exclamation from my friend, a quick stir in the darkness, and the sound of muffled blows, and of one falling heavily on the floor. I sprang forward shouting for help. Suddenly it seemed to me that a thunderclap burst out of my head bones and blinded my eyes with lightning. I opened them and rose and looked about me.

Thank God! I was in my bed at home and it was only a dream; I lay back and had my sleep out, rose and ate my breakfast, and was on my way to the shop of my dear friend, and all my past life had begun to flash before me in swift-moving scenes when:

"He's stirring — put the gag on him," I heard a voice say, just above a whisper. I understood, but with the consciousness of the stricken ox, who knows not how to lift his head.

A rough hand caught my throat, while another forced my jaws apart with a round stick and stuffed my mouth with handkerchiefs. I could not move or make a sound. My feet and hands were paining me and, suddenly, I knew that they were bound together. I opened my eyes and saw light with shadows moving in it. I heard a roar like that of falling water, and my brain cleared

and began to serve me. They had shoved a stick under my knees and above my arms, and locked me in the attitude of a man sitting on the ground with hands clasped over his shin-bones. My wrists were aching from the bind of the rope. In this plight I found myself on the bedroom floor unable to speak or make a sound, leaning head and shoulder against the wall.

A lighted candle stood on the chair beside me. Two men were tiptoeing about the room. I could see my friend lying on the robes of fur that covered his bed and trailed on the floor. His face, now red and swollen, was turned toward me on the pillow. His shirt had been torn open and a part of his breast was bare. His arms lay outstretched on either side of him. I tried to call to him, and suddenly I began to tremble and hot tears wet my face, for something in the prone body reminded me of his "Great Master," and the spirit of the youth came out of my memory and passed before my eyes, and now, at last, I felt its loveliness and power, and a sense of its value to this needy world of ours.

Soon I looked at the strange men. They wore masks, and one of them was stuffing rags

around the window-frames. Suddenly, they dumped me into a big sack, a coarse, ill-odoured gunny sack, so large that its end came well above my head.

"Out with the light," one whispered, and the other obeyed, and we were in darkness.

One drew the sack's end over his shoulder and carried me out of the room. As he did so, I caught the odour of gas. They had killed my friend and opened the gas-cocks so those who found him would think that he had died by his own hand.

My hope had fallen like a tree, for I had seen their crime, and they would not dare to release me. I gave up and felt sure that I lay in my shroud.

Well, they bore me to the stair-top, closed the door behind them, and stood and listened for a moment. Far away I could hear the whistle of some river-boat, but no other sound. They carried me down the stairs and flung me into a carriage. We went slowly out of Kerrigan Place, and hurried down the avenue. It was the longest ride that I ever took in my life but, by and by, the carriage halted and they dragged me out of it, where I could hear the wash of the river. One of them flung me over his

shoulder and began walking. He dropped me, after a little, kicked me, and cursed my weight, for it was then near a hundred and fifty pounds. I could hear a boat chafing on timber and the slap of waves on her side.

In a second I was being lowered in the air and felt the rub of rough wood on the gunny sack. A hand caught and swung me out a little, and down I banged on the sloping side of a cockpit, as I guessed. There I lay and knew not what was going on about me until I was lifted and flung into water. It washed above my face, and I felt myself drowning. But it seemed that I could not die. I struggled and smothered and continued to know and suffer a long, long time, as I thought then. I know now, that I was being dragged by the boat's side and for not more than three or four minutes.

Suddenly I heard a voice saying: "Whatever is this 'ere in the water by the boat's side?" and recognized the voice of Rone.

Then I could feel them hauling me aboard, and it was harshly done. They ripped the gunny sack and took the gag from my mouth, and what followed in the next two or three hours I knew not, for my eyes and ears and all sense of feeling had ceased to serve me.

CHAPTER XIII

I AWOKE in daylight, very stiff and sore, and flat on my back. My feet and hands and mouth were free, thank God, and where was I — was it a ship's bunk? Yes, I could hear the creak of timbers and the wash of waves. I heard a rustle of skirts and soft, retreating footsteps, but saw no one. I turned my head a little and it seemed to have bulged on one side almost to the point of my shoulder. I felt it over with great curiosity and a feeling that resembled awe. As to the pain it held, that bulge on my head was a horn of plenty. But I shall cease to speak of my woes, save when I must for the sake of my history, for I would not unduly afflict the reader.

My clothes had been removed and lay on the floor near me. My mind struggled to right itself, and in a second was on its feet, as one may say, and thinking well enough for me, and how swiftly! They had not cared to drown me in the river where my body might be discovered in a day and make

trouble. Rog Rone would take me far out and drop me, by and by, so that even the keen Napoleon would be none the wiser. I knew that Rone would assert that he had picked me up in the river, but I knew, also, or shrewdly guessed, that my ducking was only a ruse. I tumbled out of the bunk and felt my swollen wrists and ankles. I could hear the familiar tap of Rone's cane on the deck above. A great fear shook my heart for a second, but I flung it off and took command of myself. My coat and trousers, still damp with river-water, lay on a stool near me. I wallowed into them and discovered, as I did so, that my money was gone. I thought of my friend, now gone to his long home, I had no doubt, and stood for a moment reeling and sobbing like a child.

What had become of that foolish poet who had entered the darkened room with us? Was he also a link of the interminable chain and in league with the radicals? Or had he run away, as seemed more likely, at the first sign of trouble?

I thought of Ruth and her father. They would be sure that I had lost heart and deserted them, in the manner of a scared cur, without a word of regret. I could see

the anger of Israel Horton, and the delight of his wife, and knew that Ruth would lose all regard for me. Honestly, these troubles made me forget my peril. I limped to the companionway, not more than a dozen paces from where I stood, and climbed to the deck very weak and sore. I could hear the voice of Rog Rone shouting: "Dod ram yer pictur', Bill Horkins, none o' yer monkey tricks, now."

Then came the tap of his cane, and:

"Ho there, matey!" his voice roared, and I turned and saw him approaching me.

I made no answer.

"Wal, by the jomped up Moses!" he exclaimed. "For a man that has had his life saift an' been give medicine an' took care of very gentle an' pertic'lar —— "

"And sandbagged and robbed of his money," I interrupted him to suggest, in a spirit of utter recklessness.

"Hold hard, my pippin," said Rog Rone with a stern wink.

His face came forward and I could hear the grating of his teeth as he looked at me. "You git on the high ropes here an' you'll take a walk up Ladder Lane an' down Hemp Street, and do it suddent, cappy. I

ain't done nothink to you but safe yer life, so I ain't, an' what do you do but grab an ax an' hack me, as ye might say, which ain't no way to treat a friend — is it now?"

His heavy cane seemed to curse and threaten with sundry taps on the deck, as he addressed me.

"What became of my money?" I asked.

"Look a here, I don't know nothink at all about it," said Rog Rone impatiently. "You must 'a' been out on a gent's holiday an' been robbed an' flung in the river, an' was too mean t' sink — that's what 'pears t' me."

He turned and left me with such a look of injured innocence that I could not help laughing.

Nobody, save this old pirate and two of his friends, knew of what had befallen me, or that my port was the deep sea bottom. It was all a modest and quite a safe sort of piracy, and had been, perhaps, highly useful in the old secret work of the Chain. I could see in it the explanation of many mysteries.

Some one brushed against me and fell, and a pail of potatoes scattered across the deck. A girl — the cook's helper as I learned that day — knelt beside me and began to pick them up.

"Say, boss," she whispered, "don't make no row or you'll git a crack on the head, an' then Cap'n Rog 'll throw ye over. You be careful an' do as he says."

Meanwhile, she picked up the potatoes and made off with them, having done me a great service, for then and there I began to use my wits. In a moment my plan was made.

I felt weak and returned to my bunk and lay undisturbed in a sound sleep until evening. I awoke much refreshed and went to Rone and offered to help in the ship's work, if there was anything that I could do. He asked me into the cabin and said coolly, as we stood by the table: "Take a chair, sonny."

Then he said that he had found me floating in a sack off the battery.

"I opened my mouth an' bellered when I seen it was you, matey — hope t' die if I didn't," said the old wretch, as if he really thought that he was fooling me, "an' I says to myself, I says: 'They've robbed an' chloryformed him an' give him over to the sharks — like you'd toss a bone to a dog — so they have,' an' I drawed ye into my boat an' saift yer life, an' that's the God's truth, pippin."

"Yes, you saved my life — there's no doubt of that — and I wonder what you're driving at."

I thought that he saw my distrust in my eyes then, for he sat looking into my face and winked playfully. Somehow it reminded me of a cat playing with a mouse.

"I wouldn't wonder but what you was good leather, pippin!" he exclaimed as he looked me over. "Now, like as not you could be scraped an' caulked an' tightened, mind, so as ye'd hold water, an' painted over an' made a cook of or — or a sailor."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, sonny, it might be — it just might be, if ye looked good an' tight an' seaworthy, that Cap'n Rog o' the *Susq* would give ye a job."

"Suppose I give you one?" I proposed, seeing my chance at last.

"What!" said he.

"Suppose I give you a job that will be likely to put a wad in every one of your pockets, and another to draw from big enough to fill a feather-bed?"

"Wal, what's yer ladink?" he demanded with a cunning smile.

I began with that night when the mute

messenger came to me in Liverpool, and I gave all the known factors in my old, hope-breaking mystery. I put my heart in the telling, and before I was done with it old Rog Rone was leaning forward on his elbows and staring into my face. I dwelt at some length on the fortune, which, as I had reason to hope, was awaiting me. I omitted no touch of colour that belonged to the story, and told it so well, for one of my practice in such a matter, that he smote the table when I had finished, and then:

"Spank along!" he shouted. "Blow yer bazoo."

Now, at last, I had him by the ears — nay, even by the soul, in a manner of speaking, and why not? This man was for sale to the highest bidder, and the thought of hidden treasure appealed to him.

"I can't go on — I'm at the end of my rope," I said. "If you want any more you'll have to help me unravel the mystery."

"If ye can find him — he'll give ye some money," said Rog Rone, with a wink. "The dear ol' man has got the billyrocks, an' I wouldn't wonder."

The idea of a waiting fortune caught and clung to him like a barbed hook. He limped

up and down the cabin for a moment, and then flung an atlas on the table.

"The letter was writ March the third," said he, dropping into a chair. "The bearer started that day. The *Northland* must 'a' left New York on the eight' or nint' to reach Liverpool March nineteen — that's sure as a headache after a day ashore."

As I added more details the old captain sat smoking thoughtfully, his stiff leg on a stool. Soon he looked up at me and said with a wink:

"Well, pippin, I've got some other business ahead. When that's done I'll ship with ye an' divvy even if ye pay the expenses. Can ye raise the wind fer a few hundred?"

"I'll try," was my answer.

"Friends fer life, shipmate!' he exclaimed as he began groping in the drawer of an old table.

He found a pair of compasses and tied a lead pencil to one leg of them. Then, having spread his atlas on the table, he fixed the point of the other leg on the city of New York.

"Look a' here, matey," said the captain. "Yer dear uncle is somewhere from four to five hundred mile f'm New York, an' that's as easy as t' count the wings on a gull."

I wondered why he should think so, being ignorant of his advantage in a perfect knowledge of the facts.

"There's a lot of country from four to five hundred miles from New York," I suggested.

"C'rect!" he exclaimed. "But I've an idee where to begin work, as the lady said when the flea bit her."

He began to whistle an old chanty as he took the scale — an inch for every hundred miles, if I remember rightly — and measured a radius of four hundred miles from New York on the atlas, and swung the pencilled leg of his compasses through an arc some two thousand miles in length. With a radius of five hundred miles he described a new arc, and between the two lay a curving zone one hundred miles wide.

The captain ran his finger along the arc that swept through the wooded regions of Canada. We began searching that part of our zone and in a moment he had found Lac Crèche, which lay northwest of Quebec.

"That's where we steer, cappy," said Rog Rone with another wink at me.

"Why there?" I asked.

"Aint them the letters? an' aint I reckoned the distance an' don't I know 'bout where to

land, as the lady said when she cuffed the gentlemen?"

I doubted his conclusion a little, but had no suspicion of it. I sat thinking of my own dullness, for I had spent a year of fruitless effort with this problem and held my tongue for shame, and the fear of losing all that I had gained.

An oil-stone lay on the table and he took out his dirk and began to whet it. His head swayed as the dirk flew back and forth, over the whetstone. Soon he began to sing in a doleful tone:

Come mates, I'll tell ye where an' when
I seen the blood of a hundred men,
An' left my blade in the skipper's neck
To dodge his ghost on a slippery deck.

Chorus

An' I hearn the wimmen squeal,
An' the Devil had hold o' the wheel.
He sailed her well
An' our port was Hell
Way down in the straits o' Hemp, my lads,
In the red-hot straits o' Hemp.

Soon he rose and bade me stay there, while he went out for a look at the men. In a moment I heard him say in a loud, complaining voice, as he limped away:

"Dod ram yer pictur', Bill Horkins!"

CHAPTER XIV

NEXT morning the Cap'n bade me go ask the cook what I could do for her. Ours was a "lady cook," one Mrs. Larriper, a robust Irish woman of a stern nature and some two hundred pounds of bone and muscle. It was her first cruise on the *Susq*, and she set me scrubbing the fo'c'sle and cabins, which resembled a pigsty in look and odour.

"It's the dirtiest old tub that ever ploughed water," she said to me. "I took the place to give a bit o' fresh air to the gal as needed it — the way I'd do ag'in if there was nothin' else t' do in the worruld. But we didn't know the looks o' the ship or the crew, an' come aboard in the night, an' whin we wanted to go back didn't the ol' divvle tell us we'd have t' swim?"

Her daughter was a blue-eyed, slender maiden of the name of Wave — light-footed as a deer. Her feet always ran and her brown curls flying in the breeze put me in mind of sea spray. She was like the restless

waves in the midst of which, as her mother told me, the girl had first seen the light and grown to maidenhood. It was she who had warned me when I first stood on the deck of this dirty old tub of wickedness.

The *Susq* had a vile-looking crew — a lot of half-dressed, cursing roustabouts, willing to serve any master for any pay, if the grog were ample, and in that matter Rog Rone was generous. He gave to the men almost as freely as he gave to himself, and for a number of days there were loud words and fighting in the fo'c'sle and on the deck even. Often I have seen him wave his cane over the head of the first mate, and heard his familiar shout: "Dod ram yer pictur', Bill Horkins," coupled with threats and curses. Horkins would dodge the cane and make no answer, or, at least, none that I ever heard.

It was Mrs. Larriper who pulled things up with a turn. Cap'n Rog had run up behind Horkins, and struck him down with the heavy cane he carried. The mate lay stunned and helpless, and what more the Cap'n would have done, I shall never know, for before he could strike again, Mrs. Larriper had him by the hair of his head and gave

him a whirl that brought him down hard on the boards. She seized his cane and shook her fist in his face, and summed up his character with a phrase quite as apt as it was vulgar.

"Clear out o' me sight — or I'll throw ye over the ship's side — ye drunken slob, ye!" she shouted as she swung her big arms that were able, as he knew, to make good her promise.

"An' I an' every man on the ship 'll stan' by ye, an' he knows it, too," said the mate as he rose.

She gave him a look that made him take a step backward.

"Every man!" she shouted. "As if by G —— as if they was a man in the whole pack o' yez. Get out o' me sight, ye sore-eyed villain!"

The mate slunk away as Rog Rone rose to his feet.

"Here, take yer little pipe cleaner," she said to him as she put the cane in his hand. "If ye ever raise it to me I'll break it over yer head, man, an' I'll double ye up like a jack-knife an' put ye into me pocket — jisht! If ye don't run the ship I will, an' there'll be no more grog this cruise — remember that now."

"All right, lady!" he answered as he looked at me and winked and beckoned with his head. I followed him into his cabin.

"Now did ye ever see the likes o' this 'ere lady-bird?" he asked confidentially. "I never could fight a lady, no way. She's a navy ship full-rigged an' reg'lar, an' well braced an' all timbers sound, with guns at her ports an' her hold full o' powder, an' stan's up very proud an' graceful, I say."

"And it takes a good man to command her," I suggested.

"The queen o' women!" he exclaimed with a playful wink. "Wonderful tidy an' knows her business. Her pa was a sailor an' she was born at sea an' so was her gal."

There was little grog drinking after that, and the Cap'n treated the "lady cook" with a gentleness and gallantry of which I would not have thought him capable, and did everything in his power to make her task easy.

He had been well within the truth when he called her a tidy woman. She had got the ship clean and was keeping it so. The men had grown careful, since one of them had been slapped by her for a case of expectoration at once copious and indiscreet. They

picked up their litter, and spat over the side, and obeyed her orders. It paid them, for she was in command of the Cap'n, presently, and could do about as she pleased, and that was very well, as we all agreed. She made the most of the ship's stores and better cooking I have rarely known at sea, and she loved to hear us say that we liked it, and would sit half the night mending a man's trousers.

Well, under command of the super-cap'n, as I called the cook, the old *Susq* and all aboard her began to mend. Cap'n Rog himself -- wretched old hypocrite that he was — grew amiable and talked of sacred themes. He often read from an old, greasy Bible, in the evening, and made comments on the subject in hand which were droll and copious and almost genial. More than once, I asked myself, why he, of all men, should have found amusement in piety, and my conclusion was that he wished to improve his standing with the "lady cook." He would sometimes send for her in the evening after her work was finished, and when she appeared at the door of his cabin, he would say:

"Welcome — welcome, Mrs. Larriper — come right in. We're about t' read the

scriptur's, Mrs. Larriper, which as I often say, don't do no hurt if it don't do no good."

She would sit down with a look on her face that seemed to say: "Well, go on. I'm not surprised at anything *you* do."

The Cap'n would take a chair and rest his stiff leg in another, and adjust his spectacles and begin with a query.

"Who tol' the first lie, Mrs. Larriper?" he asked one evening as he began the lesson, with a squint on one side of his face by way of restraining the energy of his thought.

"I think it would be the first man that ever opened his mouth — jisht!" she answered with a look of impatience.

"A snake, Mrs. Larriper," Cap'n Rog declared. "'The woman said the serpent beguiled me an' I did eat,'" he read and added: "A snake tol' the first lie an' the trouble started. He learnt us how — so he did. After that, Adam an' Eve saw their nakedness an' was 'shamed, Mrs. Larriper, as they orter been. If it hadn't been fer this 'ere lie there wouldn't none o' us be obleeged t' die, an' God's word fer it. Eve orter minded her business. The Lord warned her fair an' plain; she goes an' shins right up the tree as soon as He was

out o' sight, an' made a grab fer the first apple in reach an' bit right into it. That's like a woman."

He laughed and shook his head as if convinced that she had made a bad mess of it, but not to his surprise, however.

"Some say it was an orange that Eve bit," Cap'n Rog went on, "but I don't b'lieve it. Apples is more apt to make trouble. Take the juice out of 'em an' by 'n' by the devil is in it."

He passed to the crime of Cain, and said when he had finished the chapter: "They fit 'cause they hadn't much work t' do — an' that's very likely, Mrs. Larriper. Men has t' have suthink t' hammer on. Them days they didn't have no nails ner drums, ner anvils, so they hammered each other. If men have nothink else t' do they'll make black eyes an' swellinks — I dare presume t' say. It's like a man, Mrs. Larriper. Had t' whack an' hammer. Couldn't set around an' take it easy an' behave theirselves."

Again he shook his head and let out a wise and sorrowful laugh.

The Cap'n read how when men had multiplied and daughters were born to them, they

saw that women were fair, and that it was not good for man to live alone. Cap'n Rog paused and looked very wise and said:

"Now this 'ere is an idee an' no mistake, Mrs. Larriper. It's the first sign o' good sense that ever came out on a man. He's got to have some one to be 'tached to er he'll go adrift, an' what happens? He moves hellwards — he does — devil at the helm an' a fair wind. Man that cooks his own grub 'll swear when he eats it, an' a man that mends his own britches 'll tear holes in his character, an' a man that darns his own socks 'll damn 'em from top to toe, an' that's true as the good book, Mrs. Larriper. Fact is, men wa'n't made fer that kind o' business. Try t' make a bear saw wood an' what happens, Mrs. Larriper? Ye'll spoil the bear if ye try hard 'nough, I dare presume t' say. Men an' women was made t' pair up, Mrs. Larriper — an' that's as plain as the nose on yer face."

He wiped his large nose with his handkerchief, and looked earnestly at the "lady cook."

"It is," she answered quickly, "an' what's more, I'd say it was plain as the nose on your face — jisht!"

Cap'n Rog shook with laughter and smote the table by way of applause, and looked at me to observe my thought of her answer.

"Now, think o' these 'ere sailors, Mrs. Larriper," he went on. "We all fight an' swaller grog an' raise the devil. Whatever's the reason, I'd like t' know? They've lived without ladies' comp'ny, an' there's the trouble, Mrs. Larriper. No gals hold o' the tow-line, as ye might say. No purty thoughts an' gentle feelinks — nobody t' cuff their ears an' pull their hair an' jaw 'em, an' keep 'em tidy. Men like that from anybody that loves 'em — so they do."

"Men are like p'taties — jisht!" said Mrs. Larriper. "They're better when ye take the skins off 'em."

Again the Cap'n laughed and smote the table.

If he ventured any franker compliment on these occasions she would rise with impatient looks and hurry out of the cabin.

So my bitterness found some faint relief in this odd bit of comedy, and slowly my dread of the future wore away. "Cap'n Larriper" — to use a title which Rone himself conferred — had the ship well in hand. She was my friend, too, and many a whispered

conference in the galley when I went down to help her, furthered our acquaintance.

"He's got a streak o' mush in him — the ol' ninnyhammer!" she said to me. "Ye can turn his head with the shake of a petticoat."

She was right. Cap'n Larriper had found the tendon of Achilles, and was very wise in the use of her advantage, and for a time, at least, we knew how to manage him.

I learned soon that we were on our way to Quebec with a load of coal. We ran into rough weather after the fourth day and adverse winds drove us far out, so that we found ourselves, one evening, a week later, somewhere about half-way from St. John to Liverpool.

CHAPTER XV

THE *Susq* had been built for the cotton trade and had on her deck-house a large copper tank which had been kept full of water for use in case of fire. With the aid of this tank, the Cap'n explained to me, one could carry a stream of water into any part of her hold. I had found the old pump and hose and pipes, and made a boiler, and connected it with the galley stove and, to the delight of Mrs. Larriper, was soon able to fill the abandoned tank with hot water for cleaning.

It will be remembered that I had had some training in the tinker's art, and it lifted me into high repute on the *Susquehanna*. There was no peace aboard unless the decks were clean as a rolling-pin, and my way was far easier and more effective than bailing from the sea. Even the Cap'n and the crew had begun to brighten up a little. They were neater in face, hands and dress since the super-cap'n had come to her rightful place. I sometimes think that

their souls were a bit cleaner in this new environment. There were, indeed, some signs of a better nature in every man of them.

"It's awful!" said Horkins, in a confidential talk with me. "Ye have to speak proper an' think twict, an' git up an' travel afore ye can let the spit out o' yer face. It's hard on them as chaws terbaccer, I say; an' think on it, if ye swear above a whisper like as not ye get half-rations an' a crack on the ear. I got one t'other day an' it feels as if it was wilted. Ye can't fight her. She'd lick any six men that ever walked an' then, ye see, she's a lady. It's awful, sir, she's got us all in her pocket. I didn't hire out to work in no parlour, mind ye. Not one on us has had a drop o' grog in two weeks, an' we was promised it every day when we shipped with him — we was — the rotten old molly chaser! He's gone an' fell in love with the cook — that's what he's done — and she leads him like as if she had a string on his neck. She'll throw him over one o' these days — you see. It was very funny when he fetched you aboard — so I thought, an' so I says t' them as didn't see it. He'd been out alone in a

boat an', by an' by, he comes up alongside an' sings out. I went down the ladder an' we two fetched ye up. 'Pon my word, man, I thought ye was dead.

"'Here's a man I've picked up in the river, an' I think he's a friend o' mine,' says he.

"'The man is drownded,' says I.

"'Lay him in a bunk an' I guess he'll come to,' says he.

"Then up anchors an' away. Now that didn't look right t' me, an' I says to one o' the men —'Why didn't he put him ashore?' I says.

"All that night the lady an' her gal sot there a-rubbin' an' a warmin' of ye with hot rags. She got leary o' the ol' fox, so it looked t' me. I seen him go mussin' 'round the bunk, an' she give him a shove an' sent him half acrost the cabin. Guess they had an idee that things wa'n't just as they orter be on this ship, an' they kep' an eye on ye — I'll give 'em credit for that."

So the blank in my memory had been filled and my heart as well with a keener appreciation of the "lady cook," and her daughter. They had the woman's heart in them, after all, the heart that melts with

pity and impels the hand to bestow God's mercy and tenderness. But for their kindness what would have been my fate? A baby could have smothered me in a moment when I lay helpless between life and death. Then the ship's burial and losses which I try in vain to measure, as I think of them. Moral decency had walked aboard that ship in woman's clothes, and, armed with a sufficient and peculiar power, had prevailed. Crime and all uncleanness had hidden their heads, for a time at least.

I found Mrs. Larriper in the galley, and said:

"I have learned of all that you did for me, that night, and I want to thank you. It has put me under an obligation that I can never discharge."

"Who put that in yer noddle?" she asked, with a look of annoyance.

"The first mate."

"Thafe o' the world!" she exclaimed. "The pot an' the kittle have got in a scrap. Sure it was the gal who seen 'em bring ye aboard, an' I found her a sittin' there by yer bunk with a lantern a-rubbin' yer forward like I've seen her do to her father, when he'd be sick at sea, as he was many a time. She took care o' ye, man, an' all I done was

t' kape the ol' hawk away — jisht! She wouldn't give up that ye was dead."

Mrs. Larriper bustled about the galley as she spoke, and I stood as dumb as a wooden Indian, with a lump in my throat.

"We're all bate an' broke an' dummy-fuddled since the loss o' me man," said the super-cap'n. "We've lived ashore an' the gal was like a bird in a cage, an' I couldn't kape the brats away f'm her. I can take the skin off a pirate an' hang it up on a line — I'm used to the likes of 'em — but a gal that holds yer heart in her hand — like as if it was a little bird — gits the best o' me — an' man, man, I'm at her mercy!"

Mrs. Larriper's voice broke and she paused to wipe her eyes with her apron.

"But if I do say it," she went on, "the gal has a good heart in her, an' I'm thinkin' she'll be better off at sea, though God knows, I want a dacent ship an' no pirates t' worry me life away."

A little sympathy and a few kind words have a great power in them. After that talk with her she washed the blankets in my bunk and scoured its wood-work and surprised me with special recognition in her cooking.

Things went very well with us until, one day, we found ourselves in a fog and no hand at the bellows, and the crew drunk, and little being done, save in the fo'c's'le, and there they were making history. One man had been stabbed and pursued to the galley door, at the beginning of the second dog-watch. The super-cap'n had taken charge of him and bound up his wounds, and laid him out on the floor. The other men were now in the fo'c's'le, cursing and shouting loud threats aimed at the ears of Rone. I went to the Cap'n's door and opened it. He sat smoking, with a sword and two pistols on the table at his side.

"Where's Bill Horkins — dod ram his pictur'?" he asked.

"Drunk in the fo'c's'le," I said.

"Fetch him here to me."

"Excuse me, sir, but I think he would be more likely to obey you," I answered.

"Fetch Cap'n Larriper," he commanded rather nervously.

I ran to the galley for my good friend.

"Glad to see you, Mrs. Larriper," he said as the "lady cook" appeared at his door.

"I'm not glad t' see you then — ye ol' sea rat! What did ye go give 'em the grog for?"

"I didn't," said Rog Rone. "They bu'st into my stores — so they did — an' stole a cask o' gin — my very best gin — Mrs. Larriper."

"Come with me an' him into the fo'c's'le an' we'll make 'em give it up," the super-cap'n suggested.

"It would be onsaift, Mrs. Larriper, very onsaift," the Cap'n whispered. "Them men means harm — they do — they'll chop our heads off or throw us over the side, like as not, Mrs. Larriper, if we don't look out for 'em."

The super-cap'n laughed. "I'll have to look out, indade I will," said she. "By the powers! — they might throw our heads in the same basket! Come, manny, you go hide under yer bunk like a nice little boy an' we'll protict ye."

Mrs. Larriper and I started for the fo'c's'le.

"Coward!" she exclaimed as soon as we were out on the deck. "He's a great fighter whin he's ten to one, or his enemy is back to him or has his hands tied. Then it's a caution how he can swing the sword!"

The men looked surprised as we boldly invaded their quarters. Their loud talk and

a ribald song ceased abruptly. The fo'c's'le had resumed its old aspect of the cattle-pen. The men, bleary-eyed, were sprawling on their bunks. They looked at me, sullenly, and not a word was said until Cap'n Larriper put her hand on the cask and said very calmly:

"Boys, I've tried to trate yez right, an' if yez 'ave no respec' for the Cap'n yez'll have a little fer me an' the gal. I want yez should roll this out on the deck an' throw it overboard — jisht! Come, now — me hearties!"

The first mate rose with an oath and got astride the cask and said:

"We all love ye, Cap'n, but we'll take no orders f'm you — not none at all. The ol' liar promised easy times an' six rounds o' grog a day for ev'ry man, an' if he won't give it, we're goin' to help ourselves, an' we're all of a mind here. You an' yer friend an' yer gal go into the galley an' shut the door, an' stay there, an' ye'll be let alone. Mind what I say, now."

"An' did yez never hear o' the straits o' Hemp?" Cap'n Larriper asked calmly. "Sure, man, yez are on yer way there, an' if yez are lookin' fer trouble yez'll find a

plenty right here on the ol' ship. Yez'll take yer orders f'm me, boys, an' mind yez do what I tell yez. Go t' bed quiet now an' be ready fer work at the mornin' watch, an' yer grub 'll be waitin' an' every man 'll be used right. I don't care the snap o' me finger for that ol' brat in the cabin, but mind yez now, kape hold o' yerselves. It's mutiny yez are up to an' that'll not be tolerayted."

She motioned me on ahead of her and we made our way to the deck. Her face had been white with anger, but she had wisely kept herself well in hand. The fog had lifted and the sun was down to sea level. Cap'n Rog stood looking out of his cabin door with a revolver in each hand.

"What did they say, Mrs. Larriper?" he whispered as we approached him.

"Sure, they're goin' t' tie yer hands an' feet an' haul ye up be the neck to the mast-head — jisht," she answered with a show of impatience.

I found a moment's joy in the craven look of the old sea-dog.

"We'd better shut ourselves up in this cabin an' fight, as long as we're able, Mrs. Larriper," he suggested. "They'll change

their minds, an' I wouldn't wonder. What's yer idee?"

"I'll go bring 'em up, wan by wan, an' turn their backs an' then ye can run up an' cut off their heads. Ye'd like that now — wouldn't ye?" said Mrs. Larriper with a playful contempt.

"You will have your joke, Mrs. Larriper, which it ain't no time for, as I have often said — when there's trouble at sea, an' that's as true as the blessed Bible, so it is," said Rog Rone.

"Will ye fight, man?" asked the super-cap'n.

"Till the last drop o' blood is drained out o' me, an' that ye'd know, if ye knowed me better, Mrs. Larriper."

"Come on with yer swords an' popguns, an' we'll take our place by the side o' the deck-house, here, manny," the good woman whispered.

As Cap'n Rog disappeared in his cabin, Mrs. Larriper imparted this information to me: "They'll be after the ol' snake soon as dark comes. Didn't the man that was cut tell me all about it? We'll have t' bate them or the divvle will take the helm. You kape the fire goin' an' the water hot an'

put a big squirt in the tank, boy, soon as ever ye can. Me an' the gal has got t' clane the deck. There's blood a plenty on the port side where the boy was cut, an' I want the ship t' be lookin' nate in the mornin'."

The crew was growing noisier in the fo'c's'le. Cap'n Rog limped out of his door with pistols and broadswords in a basket. He looked at me very soberly, and winked and passed me a loaded pistol, and I shoved it into my pocket, as I turned in to the galley. The room was hot as a Turkish bath, and the range tanks full of boiling water. I started the pump and kept the hot water flowing for about half an hour. Darkness had come, and Wave had struck the lights. I heard the tramp and voices of men on the deck, and ran to the side of the super-cap'n. She was on her knees scrubbing, with the hose in her hand. I slipped a little as I approached and went on my hands and knees, and saw that the deck had been smeared with soft-soap.

Mrs. Larriper heard them coming and got to her feet and whispered:

"Go into the cabin there with the gal an' the Cap'n, quick now. Kape yer guns still, till I give ye the word."

I wanted to stand by and fight with her, but suddenly I comprehended the plan of the super-cap'n, and made haste to obey her orders. She came close to the cabin door, and I could hear the men slipping and a heavy fall on the soaped deck. In a second two or three had gone down in the soap.

"Back with yez — back t' yer quarters, men," I heard Mrs. Larriper say, as they approached her.

A wild burst of laughter was the only answer that I could hear.

"Go t' yer quarters, I say, an' none o' yer tommy-traverse. What! yez'll show a knife t' me?"

We heard a burst of steam and the hiss of hot water, and hasty footfalls, and men tumbling headlong, and cries loud as pistol shots, and holy names mounting above the din. We ran to the side of Mrs. Larriper. The men had gone down in a heap where she had been scrubbing.

The super-cap'n had stopped the deadly spray of hot water and stood holding the hose end, that was wrapped in flannel.

"If wan o' yez pulls a gun," she shouted, "I'll stew his head off him — that I will."

Cap'n Rog made a rush with his broadsword, and had begun to slash right and left at the helpless men before we could stop him. Mrs. Larriper caught him by the nape of his neck in a jiffy and brought him down. Men with heads and faces half-cooked, I fancy, were groaning as they crawled away on their hands and knees, like so many pigs. Others lay stunned and helpless where they had fallen.

"Take the hose, Wave, an' we'll grab their knives an' pistols — quick now," the super-cap'n shouted as her hand dove into a man's pocket. Cap'n Rog and I jumped to obey the order and had seized the weapons of two scalded men and flung them into the sea, when I saw the first mate turn quickly and make a lunge at the "lady cook" with his knife. She caught him by his working wrist and the seat of his trousers and carried him a few paces and flung him into the fo'c's'le and a part of her skirt went with him.

Another man had got to his knees, and put a bullet through my left arm, when the devil ran away with us. The Cap'n was yelling and chopping with his broadsword, and I in hot pursuit of a man who had scrambled up and was running for the

fo'c's'le. I felled him with a blow on his head, and he tumbled in a heap on the weather-boards of the open door. I came to with my head in a swirl and Mrs. Larriper's hand on my shoulder.

"That'll do — that'll do, boy," she was saying. "Come with me, now."

She carried a lantern in her hand, and Rog Rone was beside her.

"You stand here with yer dough-trimmer, little man, an' mind ye kape 'em inside," said the good woman.

We left the Cap'n at the fo'c's'le door and began to explore the deck. We found a man lying with his swollen head on one of the anchor chains. Mrs. Larriper took away his knife and pistol, and helped him to his feet very tenderly.

"Poor lad! come with me, now — that's a good boy — an' I'll be yer mother — please God — till yer out o' yer trouble," she gently urged as she led him along.

There were no more of the scalded crew outside the fo'c's'le, save three who lay in the soaped area, dead or dying from their wounds, and those in the galley, and him I had done for. We could hear groans inside, as we passed the fo'c's'le door, where

were Wave and Rog Rone, the latter very alert with his cane in one hand, his bloody broadsword in the other. Our battle was won, for we knew that we had little to fear from the men who had gone to cover. I followed Mrs. Larriper and her charge to the galley, where she covered the face and neck of the afflicted man with oil, and laid him beside his mate on the floor.

There is little more which the reader will need to know of those black days on the *Susquehanna*. How first we cleaned the store-room of its grog and threw it into the sea; how the "lady cook" and her daughter helped in the burial of two, who put off on their last cruise about midnight; how at daybreak, Mrs. Larriper bravely entered the fo'c's'le, armed with coffee and toast, porridge and potatoes and bacon, and a cheerful greeting; how both women bound up the wounds of the afflicted and nursed them with a mother's tenderness — of all and each of these details there is little which I may properly set down, for you can read of their like in many books — but in this of mine, I am telling of things which have rarely if ever happened in the adventures of other men.

We were two weeks with a fair wind, bringing the ship to port, and had only one member of the crew to help us. My left arm had been put pretty well out of business; the wound was a trifle, but the torn muscles let my blood like a score of leeches, if I put the least tax upon them.

Cap'n Rog took great credit to himself for our victory, but could only wink and shake his head and swear and smite the table in his effort to do justice to the "lady cook." He found a parallel in the Scriptures for the whole occurrence and, with the gin overboard, had less philosophy and better seamanship. Each gave a hand in the work, Cap'n Larriper having full command, and we slowly wore out the voyage with, perhaps, a fourth of our canvas, and one bright morning, late in May and early in the forenoon watch, we wallowed up the harbour of Quebec.

"'Member, matey, ye've gi'n me yer word," said Rog Rone, as we stood on the deck together, looking up at the town. "Fair play in an' out, which, as I always said, is the only way atween frien's. Fair play's the word!"

"I shall do as I agreed," was my answer.

CHAPTER XVI

WE LOWERED an anchor, and Rone went ashore in a small boat. I told my plans to Cap'n Larriper.

"Look out fer the old divvle," she whispered. "He's tame now, but when he's had a pull at the gin he'll be as wild as ever. Don't ye niver trust the man. He'll be soft as mush till ye have the money, then, some day when yer back is turned, his cane 'll fly like the paw of a cat an' that'll be the end o' ye, boy."

I promised to be careful, and the "lady cook" began to prepare food for our journey into the forest. About six weeks had passed since I found myself in a bunk on the *Susquehanna*. I sat down and wrote their history and more in a long letter to Ruth Horton, and omitted not to tell her of my proposed journey ashore, and of its hopeful promise.

Cap'n Larriper loaned me a trifle of money, and went ashore with the letter and a telegram to James Darklight, of whom

I sought quick information regarding my friend, the shoemaker. I was now in absolute command of the *Susq.*

Our disabled men had sore heads and hands, and a sorry look, but were about the deck and in good spirits, and disposed to stick to the old ship as we thought. The man who had had a knife thrust to its hilt in his upper arm was now the ablest seaman of them all. The super-cap'n had won their hearts, and when they began to see the straits of Hemp in their worry, she poohpoohed the whole matter as a mere "trifle of a tiff" and set their minds at ease. They were like children about the knees of a big mother and they loved her, but as men love who scarcely know what to do about it — with rough oaths and smiles, and oxlike submissiveness and now and then a tear in the eye.

Cap'n Larriper returned at midday with an answer from Darklight. It said:

> "The shoemaker gone for about six weeks, nobody knows where. Thought him with you, shop closed. Entered window. Nobody there. All send love."

The message surprised and puzzled me. I had expected to hear of the discovery of the lifeless body and of its burial. I was

perplexed with theories. I thought of Crabtree and saw a possibility that he might have returned with help and brought my friend back to life. Lovel had told me that he was going away and so, perhaps, he had gone. I wrote a telegram to Condon, begging him to ascertain where I could reach my friend, if possible, and let me have a prompt answer.

Cap'n Rog returned in a tug soon after noon, and took the *Susq* up to her dock. He had brought help aboard with him and was in high feather. He stood on the roof of the deck-house and waved his cane and bawled his orders loudly, as we moved in. Now and then he gave a downward glance to see if Mrs. Larriper were observing him. When the unloading had begun he came to me and said with a shrewd wink:

"The Cap'n has got his sails in the wind, so he has, an' we'll be off in the mornink and leave the ship with Cap'n Larriper which, God knows, she couldn't be in no better hands, I say."

He drew his wallet and removed from it a newspaper clipping and shook it in the air before me, saying:

"Now this 'ere is suthink very partic'lar

fine an' tasty in the way o' readinks. It beats the Bible — it does, an' no mistake. It was writ by a man who give it to me in one o' them newspaper offices, where I ast 'em if they knowed that place in the woods, an' I tol' 'em how ye was lookink fer yer dear ol' uncle. It's suthink very partic'lar an' I'll be obleeged if ye'll read it slow an' careful, an' give it back prompt."

He passed me the bit of paper, which, I observed, was dirty and worn at the creases, suggesting that it had been cut and folded some time before. The thought came to me that perhaps it had been among the papers in that envelope which someone had stolen from my trunk. I began then to get some light on the attitude of the old Cap'n toward myself. I read as follows:

> The few who have hunted in the vicinity of Lac Crèche may have observed the handsome harbour and the high park on its northern end. They probably will not have seen the hermit's home with its lovely garden above the cliffs, for it is hard to reach and most inhospitable. The rock walls beneath it rise sheer two hundred feet or so above the lake. There are many acres of wild country in this high plateau of the

hermitage — probably more than a hundred. The Indians call it "The Isle of the Air" — an apt phrase, for its rugged sides plunge sharply down and divide it from the rest of the wilderness. There are only three places where the traveller can ascend. At the end of a toilsome and dangerous path he will find a beautiful country. Great pines and spruces lift their tops into the sky and the smooth forest floor is a wild garden of ferns and flowers in midsummer. The trails of the hermit are bordered with them, and the ground is kept clear of brush and fallen trees. Near the centre of the plateau I came to a small pond covered with white lilies, where a number of deer were feeding, and to my surprise they seemed not to be afraid of me. The hermit's house is inclosed by impenetrable thickets of spruce and cedar and wild thorn. I climbed a small tree of ironwood to get a view of it. The house is large, for the hermit has quite a family — a friend of about his own age, a son and a number of servants, so my Indian guide informed me. It is built of spruce logs around a court — a rambling sort of structure, one story in height. It stood in the midst of a great garden of flowers and vegetables. An enormous

> black bear — for the discouragement of intruders, I presume — lay by the rear entrance. I saw only a single human being about the place, an old Indian of a tribe in the far north, they tell me. My guide had many tales to relate of this sylvan home of the hermit, some of them tinged with superstition. He would not go with me beyond the edge of the cliff, for he said the woods were haunted up there and the thickets alive with "tinga" (the spotted adder), which the hermit has collected. I encountered none of these deadly perils, but no doubt one who had the courage and impudence to penetrate this inclosure would have adventures worth recording. I went by the way of Crofton, where guides may be found who know the Crèche country.

The Cap'n had not misjudged the nature of his find, for in all likelihood the man referred to was my uncle, and it made me keen for the journey. The end of my long quest had been finally and quite definitely placed and now, soon, I should see the man who was my nearest relative, and who might be a dear and valued friend to me.

"I should like to talk with the man who wrote this," I said in some excitement, as I returned the clipping.

"An' that's what I says to him, an' very plain, an' right to the p'int," Cap'n Rog answered. "But he's off on the cars an' 'll be a thousand hails in the west by sundown. I've bought a basket with straps on, an' we'll put in some choke-dog an' be off at the end o' the middle watch. There's a wind on me, matey. I'm burning in the hawse."

Cap'n Larriper called me aside before we left and made me tell her just where and how we were going, and gave me another word of caution as to the character of my fellow traveller.

"Ye'll find two pairs o' socks an' a bit o' porridge an' a bundle o' cakes in the basket," she whispered. "But mind ye, now, they're not fer the ol' ninnyhammer — not a one o' them. The salt horse is good enough for him. Good-bye, me fine boy, and God be wid ye."

She and her pretty daughter had tears in their eyes as we left them, and I could scarcely keep back my own. I have known all kinds of people, but none with better hearts in them.

We took the cars at daybreak and were conveyed to the little mill village of Crofton.

Here we found our guide, a lean, wiry man, half French, half Indian and all woodsman. At nine o'clock, under a clear sky, we began our tramp and were soon deep in the virgin forest. The half-breed and I carried the packs, and the Cap'n growled along beside us and had all he could do to carry his stiff leg. The trail was rough, and now and then steep as a ladder or soft as hasty pudding, and Cap'n Rog grew hot and red and noisy, and complained of his "sny" and called for gin and "choke-dog," which was his name for luncheon, all too frequently.

He had loaded my pack with gin, and sat under a tilted bottle at least twenty times a day. There were moments when I thought I had never seen a man so gifted in sinful speech. He swore that we were trying to wear him out, and cursed us if he got behind a little, and once in a passion flourished his cane above the guide's head, and threatened to brain me unless I would stay back and give him a hand in the hard going, where I had enough trouble with my own share of the burden, it seemed to me. At such moments the look in his face gave me a singular fear of him, for I was young, those days, and not so brave as some, probably.

and I did my best to please him. My life and health were a part of his capital in this adventure, else, I am sure, there would be no record of it.

In his best humour, and especially if he wished me to rub his leg or do him a like favour, he would call me "matey" or "cappy" or "friendy" or "dear child." Then his voice took on a kind of softness and expressed, I doubt not, as I now think of it, a better feeling than he was wont to have. Whenever we stopped to rest, and that was often, he would sit and whet his knife and sing old barbaric songs of the sea, some of them beyond the imagination of gentlefolk in their vileness. Often he would sit and kill toads and bees and moths and butterflies, and all creatures that came within a cane's length of his body and, curiously, tear them into pieces.

It seemed as if he were always searching for blood and the writhe of torture.

In all my acquaintance with the man I never saw him asleep. Often I would awake in the deep of the night and find him sitting by the fire, muttering or tapping with his cane or groping in the basket, or standing near and looking down at us.

"Dod ram yer pictur', Bill Horkins!"

I heard him mutter, one night, as he struck the air with his cane. Sometimes the firelit gloom and the thought of my helplessness would quicken my heart a little, but I had small fear of him those days save when he got in a temper, for I knew that he was saving me to draw a pot of money from my uncle. The thought of that had begun to worry me, but I must go on and be square with him, pirate that he was.

Rone was such a clog upon us that our food gave out and we had still another day to travel. He would have it that we were to blame for this, and accused us of a plot to starve him, and cursed and muttered as he dragged along in the rear, that day of our fast.

Cold, cloudy weather was upon us and a little flurry of snow had fallen. We had been slowly climbing into higher and cooler country and came out, by and by, on a great, open marsh meadow, with a shell of ice on its water and crystals of frost in the wild grasses. We could see hoary, misty mountain-tops ahead, above the forest roof. Here was sloppy footing and Rone sat down in the water and felt his stomach, and roared with its bestial craving.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"I'm hogging, iron-sick, rotten!" he shouted. "You've yawed me all over the woods till I'm wobble-cropped. One o' ye had orter take me on his back, pippin."

"I cannot do it, and wouldn't if I could," was my answer, for I was well out of patience. "Let the gin alone and you'll carry yourself, easy enough."

It is wonderful how hard travel and a day or two of fasting will uncover a man. For a moment we both stripped our souls and showed them to each other, and I, knowing that he was well able to carry his own weight, spoke out with a brutal frankness.

He gave me a look, then, black as night and full of the devil's cunning, and it told of all he had planned for me.

"Very good, pippin," he whined in a moment. "I wouldn't 'a' thought it, 'deed I wouldn't, pippin — not when I've saift yer life an' took care o' ye gentle an' give ye the best on the ship."

"Look here, I've heard enough of that kind of thing," I said. "Don't fool yourself by trying to fool me. I know all about you, man. If I paid my debt to you I'd take that cane out of your hand and break your silly head with it. We'll drop that. I have

gone into this plan with you, and I will keep my word, but no more palaver, if you please. Lie down here and die if you want to, Rone — I've no objection."

Cap'n Rog turned pale. He glared into my eyes and seemed to shove his head toward me as he spoke.

"What d' ye go an' git sore fer, pippin? I ain't done nothink t' you — honest t' God, I ain't — an' I never meant ye no harm, pippin — not me — an' I can prove it."

"See — blind geese!" the guide shouted, pointing into the sky.

Two geese were flying slowly and aimlessly above the woods and shifting their course with every stroke of the wing. Their movements suggested great weariness. One keeled half over and fell some twenty feet and caught the air with his wings and struggled on. Suddenly he began to coast downward very swiftly and struck the top of a tall pine, at the edge of the meadow, and dropped whirling to the ground. The Cap'n leaped up and ran with a speed that astonished me toward the big pine. We followed, and when we overtook him he was beating the helpless bird into pulp with his cane. The guide stopped him and lifted

the goose and showed me that its eyes were crusted over with snow ice.

"He go south," the man explained, pointing at the mountains. "Way up high he strike snow-storm. Snow freeze on, so make 'im blind."

Our guide cut off the head and flung it away. Cap'n Rog seized it and lapped the dripping blood and clung to a leg of the goose, while we made haste to get to higher ground. Soon we had a fire going and the meat of the fowl in a frying-pan. The Cap'n hovered over it and sniffed and smacked his lips, and suddenly seized a piece of hot meat in his fingers and ran aside, eating and cursing in a manner that reminded me of a baited dog with a bone. He was determined to consume the whole carcass and, only after a fierce quarrel, we managed to save a part of it for fear of worse luck to come.

We went on in far better spirits, and the sky came clear and the air warmer and, about sundown, we could see the lake beneath us, and the lifted isle beyond it. Darkness had fallen when, having skirted the shore, we stood gazing up at the timbered cliffs of the isle. I could not wait until morning, as the others thought best, and urged the

guide to go on with me. Cap'n Rog was groaning with aches and pains, and we left him goose enough for his breakfast, and made him a bed near the lake shore, and got ready to ascend the trail. There was a curious whine in the voice of the old sea-dog, as he called me to his side just before I left him, and addressed these words to me:

"Keep me in yer mind's eye, friendy, an' 'member ye've gi'n me yer word. Dear child! You don' know how I'll worry — so ye don't."

The guide took a long rope from his basket and slung it over his shoulder, and we tramped a mile or so around the cliff before we got a footing. The night was clear and a full moon straight above us. We halted where the rocks came to our feet in naked terraces steep as a Dutch roof. My guide looped an end of the rope around his own body and tied the other just above my hips, and so we began our climb. Our clothes were torn and our hands bleeding, when we got to a line of small timber which grew out of a great crevice in the rocks, and seemed to pour over the edge above us like a narrow, green cascade. There we drew our weight from tree to tree, and soon came to a level

footing in thick woods. My guide led me to the trail, some twenty rods from the edge of the cliff, and having got my direction I bade him return to our little camp on the lake shore. As I felt my way alone over the smooth trail a sudden fear of those perils, of which I had read enough to stimulate a rather lively imagination, fell upon me. There was only a faint light under the crown of the forest, and I went on slowly with a large navy revolver in my hand. I stumbled against the high hedges of the hermitage, by and by, and fell. The rustling boughs startled some animal in the moonlit inclosure. It crashed through the bushes with a deep growl and went quickly out of hearing. I groped along the thicket's edge, wondering what I should do next, when suddenly I saw a beam of light slanting downward in the darkness and wavering all about me. I stood still, and soon it fell upon my body, and then upon my face. Its glow seemed to bewilder me so that I reeled, and shaded my eyes, and had a helpless feeling all at once. In half a moment the voice of a man called from the upper story of the woods, near me:

"Who's there?"

I told my name and briefly explained my mission. Then said the voice:

"Stand still, and I will come to you."

The beam of light swung away and shot over the wall of thickets. I saw its colour change from orange to violet; I saw it sway in the gloom for half a moment and disappear. Soon I could hear feet slowly descending on a ladder. They reached the ground, and again the light flashed upon me.

"Where's Vincent?" the voice queried.

"Vincent?" I asked.

"Your uncle's messenger."

"He died in Liverpool — the night he found me."

The man came near and held the light on my face. He turned the light on his own. I uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"You have seen me before?" he asked.

"Yes; you are Gabriel Horton," was my answer. "I saw you at the Lanthorne in New York."

"Yes, yes — you know my brother — poor man! How is he?"

"He was well when I saw him but a little more than six weeks ago. How is my uncle?"

"Dead!" he answered simply, and stood a moment stroking his long beard in silence.

"Went to New York long ago to find a friend. It seems that he found, in some old music store, a violin which he had lost many years ago. He remained there until his death, soon afterward. A great musician was David, and a good friend, too."

I felt a bitter sense of disappointment. I had come too late and could never give my uncle the help he desired.

"You are welcome here," said Gabriel Horton, as he took my arm and led me to a narrow path that followed the hedge. He stopped soon, and took another look at my face and said: "You are like him. I am glad to see you."

At his side was an opening in the edge of the thicket. This we entered and tramped back and forth in a maze of narrow trails between thick walls of evergreen, and shortly entered a garden with a row of lighted windows beyond. As we went on I heard the deep growl of some beast near the trail we followed.

"Keep close to me," said my guide. "You are now in another world. It will seem strange to you." Soon he added: "I saw your campfire in the valley and went to the lookout."

We crossed a large veranda and my guide raised the wooden latch of a door and swung it open and bade me enter. Candles were burning on a table in the centre of a large room. It was a library walled with books on every side, and there were the skins of bear and caribou and gray wolves on the floor. A microscope, globes and charts, and a human skeleton stood near the table. Logs were burning in the rude fireplace, built of dry-laid stones. The floor, walls, and ceiling were of spruce and cedar, nicely hewed and split. My leader drew two chairs before the fire, for the night was chilly, and bade me sit down. He extinguished the burning candles and came and sat with me in the firelight, and slowly filled his pipe.

"I have a long story to tell you," he said, "and if you are not too weary I will begin at once."

CHAPTER XVII

Matter is not dead but alive and everywhere palpitating with energies, and organic life is simply . . . a complex form of the universal life.

HERBERT SPENCER

The physical splendour of light and color . . . is an entirely spiritual consciousness accurately and absolutely proportioned to the purity of the moral nature and to the force of its natural and wise affections.

RUSKIN

I AM a man of few words," he began. "I have little faith in them. They are the playthings of a child and men should learn to put them away. Even these I now speak are false. They will deceive you, though I wish them to tell the truth, but I shall do my best.

"Twenty-five years ago my health broke down. I sought help of a great physician — your uncle, Dr. David Holm, of Detroit. My health improved and for almost a year I lived in his home. We had like tastes and were well abreast in our thought of the mysteries, and were lovers of nature, and almost music mad.

"Suddenly his wife died, leaving him a

baby son, just born, and a broken heart. I went in quest of a nurse for the child. The only available one was a deaf mute, and she came to us. The infant sickened and was near death. It was midsummer and hot. We left the city, seeking better air for our patient, knowing it to be the only remedy. We sailed out of the lakes, and down the St. Lawrence, and took to the woods, by and by, having heard of this place, where a certain herb which the doctor desired for his child grew in abundance. We went on slowly with two guides.

"The tenth day of our journey afoot we camped on the shore of the lake below. Next morning we ascended to this isle of the sky, and found our home at last. The child was now strong and hearty and so were we all. We began to build our camp and little by little made for ourselves a kind of heaven. We had no notion of staying long and planned for a summer home only, but here we remained. We had found a place void of envy and vanity and malice and deceit, and where we had time enough, at last, to do the things that we wished o do. We were both stronger than we had been in years and were drawn to a new task. A

lawyer closed our relations with the world and there was little to call us back.

"Ah, he was a rare spirit — your uncle — and more than a brother to me. We understood each other and thought as one, but with doubled vision. These vital queries led us out of soundings: What would the mind acquire of its own instruction? How would it explain itself and nature? Would it go to the truth straightway, as the bird flies to its home? Is not much of its heritage — instincts, powers, capacities — weakened and broken down by the meddling of its elders? Do not the schools destroy powers better than those they impart?

"The child grew strong, and we planned to take account of his wisdom. We would defer teaching him a word, even, of conventional knowledge as long as possible, and learn, by and by, what we could of him. My friend used to say that we should learn of children instead of teaching them. That was our plan. The child lived with his mute nurse and neither of us had ever a word to say to him. The woman sent for her brother, who was also a mute, to come here and be our servant. Two Indians, who knew nothing of our language, have also

helped us in the work of the 'island.' So the child was pretty well shut away from the conventional inlets of human knowledge. It may seem cruel to you, but really it was not so. We spoke to him with music and very freely. Every day your uncle played for him on the violin, and it seemed to soothe all discomfort and satisfy his longing. He began to imitate the sound of the instrument and so saved and developed his voice. We kept him apart and beyond the sound of our speech, and in his third year he gave us names, and they were short phrases of music. He did not forget or vary them in the least, for years. He had seen one of the Indians fire a gun, and he named him with a sound suggesting that of a rifle. In like manner he gave each a name, that of his nurse being only a slow, gentle movement of his hand, which served for years, although in time he found another and a better name for her.

"Soon he had learned the songs of the birds and could whistle them with an art so wonderful that they seemed to think him of their own tribe and came without fear to his hand.

"In time the boy developed a shrewdness that surprised us both. I observed that he

began to watch our faces very closely. He was in his fifth year when a new power had come to him. I saw that he was able to see my thoughts, or so I concluded. The look of my eyes, the lift of a brow, the delicate play of muscles, that shape one's face to the mood of his spirit, the feel of my hand, all had a meaning and he understood them. He had a way of conveying his thoughts to us — at first by signs and a language very musical and all his own. There were sounds in his voice sweeter than the best tones of the violin. Slowly he abandoned signs and prattle.

"A singular result had come, and one we had not anticipated. I could easily satisfy myself that he knew many of my thoughts. It came largely, we felt sure, from well-trained eyes. He had been compelled to depend upon them for his knowledge and they had now opened the gate of a world forever closed to us. They found delight in colours which we could not see, in distances beyond the reach of our vision.

"It is a wonderful thing — the eye of man. You know how the hunter will see game in far thickets which we look in vain to discover! We do not know how to use our eyes. We take our knowledge from

others and acquire no skill in observation. Our boy had discovered the shadows of our thoughts.

"We had our theory to account for this. When you think of a special thing you make a mental picture of it. You see a tree, for instance, before you speak its name, and if my eyes were keen enough I should find some faint reflection of the image in your face. Stand before the mirror and think of a serpent and then of a dove, and you will see your face change. Now this training of his eyes had, somehow, stimulated the brain cells behind them and a sixth sense had come to him, or something like it, a power of observation which understood the subtlest changes in my face. I saw, too, that one loses the great gift, in part, if it be neglected in childhood.

"The boy's insight so far transcended ours that a new step was necessary. We began to teach him English. He learned it with astonishing ease and quickness. He was ten years of age and could read music and play the violin. He had no sooner acquired the use of words than he began to puzzle us with queries and seemed to get our answers before we had spoken them.

"'What was beyond the hills and the mountains?' he asked.

"'More hills and mountains,' I answered.

"'And more people?'

"'Yes.'

"When he asked: 'Who made the sky and the trees? Whence came all? Why were we living?' we frankly expressed our want of knowledge and sought it of him.

"'You are our teacher,' we said. 'Tell us who made the sky and the trees and the mountains?'

"He shook his head, doubtfully, and said that he would find out and tell us. He began to think, feeling, as he seemed to do, our need of knowledge and the will to supply it. He really began to be our teacher then.

"He had seen the miracle of the egg, and got from the birds a notion of fatherhood and motherhood.

"By and by, he informed us that the valleys of the earth were like great nests full of young, and that the father and mother were Light and Darkness. Light went away to bring comforts for her children, and Darkness came to hide them while they slept.

"Tree, flower, fern, and beast were, therefore, his brothers and he loved them, but he

saw this difference between himself and them: he could make a fire and they could not. Man was the favoured child of Light — the great mother — for she had given him the power to summon her in the darkness. He had but to strike a fire and she was with him to illumine the night and temper the cold.

"You see he had gone to myth-making, as had the men of old.

"We made him a partner in our studies. One day his father gave him a few dry, withered seeds and bade him plant them. They sprang up and spread their colours, by and by.

"We watched a caterpillar weaving its cocoon. It lay dead and, in time, we saw a butterfly break the shroud and come out in bright azure wings.

"He looked into my microscope and saw the swarming life hid by its littleness. He saw that everything had life in it — even the rocks and the forest mould — and that all was on the road to beauty and betterment. It was like the withered seed and the caterpillar. He knew only *life* and there was no such thing as death in his view, for he had never been able to discover it.

"By and by his nurse died.

"He sat beside her and seemed to be thinking of the great procession of life which we had seen together.

"'She has fallen like a tree,' he said. 'She will wither and change like the seed and the caterpillar.'

"You see, he could think of life only as a thing inextinguishable and of many homes. To him death was nothing but a change of form and place and colour.

"That night we buried her, and next day he got a notion that the darkness had taken her away, but was comforted knowing that she could call the light to her side.

"'I will look for her,' he said.

"'Why?'

"'Because I loved her and promised her a wolf-skin blanket and a pair of moccasins.'

"His notion of justice demanded that he should see her again so that he might pay his debt to her.

"You may ask how it was that with his singular power he failed to gain possession of our store of knowledge. I answer, that in spite of us he did acquire much of it. But you must know that I and my friend were skeptics. We had minds blank of all belief as to the First Cause, until he opened

our eyes a little. Then, too, we had discovered this hindering fact: our thoughts were never surely conveyed to him unless we uttered them in a sort of mental whisper.

"By and by a strange thing happened. He found the prayer of the world, the plan of nature, the whisper of God in his own heart.

"'My master,' he said, that being the title which, of his own will, he gave to us, 'there are many things that we cannot see with our eyes or hear with our ears, or feel with our hands. Now I know that beyond the hills yonder there are men and houses, and though we go to the land's end there is still something that we cannot see beyond — houses and men, maybe. You know that I have better eyes and ears than you have. I see colours that you do not, and sometimes I play so softly that you cannot hear the tones. But I hear them and they are wonderful. They are like the music of that country beyond the land's end. I think that the garden of our Great Master is there. Do you not know that there is a Great Master who made the earth and the sky and the men? He can stand on a mountain-top and light the stars and blow them out with his breath.'

"We taught him to read and gave him the

Bible, and he read it through time and again, thrilled by its story.

"So, briefly — for there is much that I need not tell — he found his way into the well-worn path and led us with him.

"More discoveries have come and of greater value; I can prove to you that one's thinking makes him. It shapes his soul and his body.

"Once the nurse had had a fit of anger. For a day, thereafter, we observed that her milk seemed to poison the child. It suggested a new line of work for us. We began to study the effects of thought and passion. I have seen the work of good and evil in the human body. The one weaves, the other ravels. The one is like food, the other like poison. You can trace evil thoughts into the tissues — they are like a host in arms that go abroad, burning and killing. You may see their line of march with a microscope. Pure and noble thoughts — such as one may get from a strain of music — have, also, their own reaction. You may even follow them into the blood and life cells. Give the mind enough of this kind of thinking and soon you shall see the loom of life pick up its threads and weave them into the

body. Proportions, textures, colours, shape will slowly change. You shall see the man grow godlike and beautiful, as did the youth who dwelt with us.

"My friend began to lose his health and saw his end coming, and sent Vincent to bring your father. We were both growing old. The time was nearing when he would be left alone and all the world new to him — save this little paradise. Oh, then, we began to feel about for our brothers."

Gabriel Horton knocked the ashes from his pipe and sat looking into the fire. I waited for a moment and he turned and added:

"The end of the story I cannot tell you, for God only knows what it will be."

"Is the young man with you?"

He rose and turned to me and whispered: "We shall try to find him. But my friend! you are weary. Come, I will take you to your bed."

He lighted a candle and led me to a large chamber, supplied with chairs, table, and bed, neatly fashioned, of woven fibre and young spruce. The bed of soft feathers and its cover of light fur invited me to rest, and put me in mind of my weariness, and the house of my brain closed and its light went out before I touched the pillow.

CHAPTER XVIII

I WAS awakened next day by loud voices and the roar of a rifle. I rose and stared about, my brain shaking off its dreams like a dog coming out of water. Sunlight was streaming in at the window. My watch told me that I had slept some sixteen hours. It was nearing five in the afternoon. I sprang out of bed and found a large wooden tub filled with water, ready for my bath. I dressed hurriedly and went to the large hall in which I had talked with Gabriel Horton. Its front door was open, and I stepped out upon a veranda overlooking the lake and a long, wooded valley and distant mountains. Horton stood near in a garden of flowers. He greeted me warmly and asked:

"Were others with you?"

"A guide and one other man," I said. "I have not yet told my story and perhaps I had better begin."

"First, a little refreshment," said he. "I know you are hungry."

I followed him into the hall where he sat

down beside me at the table, and snapped a long viol string, drawn taut in a wooden bow, that hung from the ceiling. Its deep tone rang through the house timbers and, presently, an Indian entered with food on a wooden salver. I began my story, but had finished eating before I was half done with it. Gabriel Horton interrupted me by saying:

"I have a man in a tree near the lookout. He may be one of your friends and, if so, we must release him at once. It's a small, gray-bearded man who swore like a pirate and called me 'Cappy.'"

"Rone," I said to myself, and the thought of him was like an ache in my bones.

"He helped me in my search for you," I stammered in a kind of panic.

"Then we shall bring him here," said Horton, as he rose and took his rifle from the wall.

We hurried through the garden and the maze of thickets, and soon heard the familiar voice of the Cap'n.

"Ahoy, mates!" he shouted from the upper branches of a small tree. "I've hit the rocks an' gone to the top horse."

The tree was swaying under his weight

like a mast in a gale of wind. A bear that was chained at the foot of it was looking up and sniffing and growling as if he shared the fears of the Cap'n.

"Give a hand, mates," Rog Rone called with an oath, as we came near the tree. "I say. cappy, p'int off a mile or so with this 'ere bear an' anchor him."

"We'll do our best for you," I answered, as Horton led the bear away, "but I must remind you that swearing is out of place here."

"An' me with a pain in my sny," he complained.

Rone came to the ground with surprising agility in view of his age and lameness. Horton had left with the bear.

Old Rog sat down, his hand on his sny and groaned as I had seen him do more than once since our journey began.

"Hell's bells! The goose is gone, cappy, an' I'm starvink — so I am," Rone complained. "I'm empty as a rum bar'l after a long cruise."

I gave him a hand and he got to his feet slowly and peered about him, his uptilted nose lifting a little in a squint that seemed to express hope, pain, and curiosity, all at once.

"Dear child! — I'm glad ye've found yer poor uncle," he grunted, as he picked up his cane.

I gave no heed to his palaver and thought that I had best wait for further knowledge and a more convenient season before I should speak of my uncle's death.

"You steer me into port, matey, and I'll load the ship," said Rog Rone, as he winked slyly.

I was in sad fear of what was coming, for he had earned his hire and it was not for me to stay him.

"Ho! ho!" the old man laughed in a low chuckle, as he clung to my arm and limped along the garden walk with his cane; "this 'ere is wonderful tidy."

In a moment he whispered: "He must have a saift full o' gold."

Gabriel Horton met us on the veranda and greeted the old wretch with a kindly but thoughtful look in his face. The Cap'n had seemed to forget his pain and whistled, as he looked down the valley, and, climbing the steps, exclaimed:

"All hands to the hurrikin deck!"

We sat down, and he wiped his brow, saying, as he gave our host a playful tap with his cane: "Glad t' see ye, cappy, an' it's

been a very partic'lar hard v'yage with no sun an' the wind ag'in us."

He lifted his stiff leg to the railing and settled comfortably in his chair, and said, "If you happen to have a snack o' meat an' maybe a noggin o' gin or rum or whisky, I'll tighten my stays a little."

Horton left us and soon returned with corn-cakes and jerked venison and a bottle of currant wine.

Rone smelt the bottle and held it up to the light with a serious and critical eye.

"Cur'nt wine!" he exclaimed with a look of disappointment. "Soun's like sassyparill' — so it does, but it takes holt as if it knowed me."

"It is old and strong," Horton said, "and needs the label of caution."

Rone ate like a dog and then talked incessantly. He had mistaken Horton for my uncle and we let him talk.

"As I said afore," he began, "we've had a partic'lar hard v'yage — me an' yer nephey, an' he a fryin' all the way 'bout his dear uncle an' me a soothink of him, which I wisht anybody would do the same t' me if they seen me in such a trouble.

"I alwus puts myself in his place, as the

good book says — so I do. I never could bear t' see nobody suffer an' me able t' help it — not me, not if I was to be hung for it. His sorrer hit me like a rope's end. He hadn't no chart er compass er anythink but them letters which he seen on the slate, an' didn't know his port, an' ev'ry time he'd think o' you he'd set an' cry like a baby. Oh, he's a lovely boy! 'No, sir,' he says, 'I don't play cards,' he says whenever I asts him, an' he won't touch a drop o' anythink stronger 'n water, an' I never knowed him t' say a word that wa'n't fit t' be heard in comp'ny, an' he don't talk too much — got a wonderful eddication but nobody 'd ever know it. I says to him, 'Look a here,' I says, 'I'll tow ye in an' God spares my life, so I will.' An' he says: 'I ain't got no money' — kind o' like that. An' I says, 'Never mind,' says I. 'Prob'ly yer dear ol' uncle will give ye suthink, which he'd be dreadful mean if he didn't, an' you give me a little, an' I'll be satisfied,' says I. An' I've brought him here by dead reck'nin,' with a sny in my leg an' iron-sick an' down by the heel, an' head, an' the wind agin us, which he'll tell ye — if ye ast him, an' that's as true as the holy book."

He turned with a furtive wink at me.

A silence rather impressive, as I think of it, followed this bit of pettifogging.

"This is Mr. Horton," I said to him. "My uncle is dead."

Rog Rone smote his knee with his fist.

"Dead! Hell's bells!" he exclaimed. "Did he leave the boy any money?"

Mr. Horton made no answer but sat looking sternly at the Cap'n.

Rone turned upon him rather impatiently and said: "I'd like t' know if this dear child is goink t' git nothink at all. Wal, now, we'll see about that an' I wouldn't wonder."

Gabriel Horton sat looking ominously into the face of Rone.

"I think we shall be able to do without your help in the matter," he said calmly.

I could restrain myself no longer, for my heart was afire with shame and out came my story in a rush of words. I told how I had met the Cap'n, how I had been gagged and bound and put in a sack and dumped in the river; how Rone had picked me up and taken me aboard the *Susq*, where next day I found myself in a bunk. I told of my compact with him, but said nothing of my fear of foul play, and gave him the benefit

of every possible doubt, and was so generous in all of my talk of him that I am sure if Cap'n Larriper had been present she would have boxed my ears and taken the floor from me.

"As to myself, I came here hoping only that I might serve my uncle in some way," I said in conclusion. "For his money I care not the snap of my finger. I have no wish nor need for it. Cap'n Rone took his chances and based his hope wholly on the words of the mute messenger. He has been most ingenious in the search. Without his help I could not have found you."

"We shall reward him, but I care little for this man," said Gabriel Horton as he rose and paced the veranda. "He has your money in his pocket now."

Rog Rone turned quickly, his hands trembling, and said in a whining, frightened tone: "I never seen er teched his money, cappy, 'pon my word I didn't."

Gabriel Horton gave as little heed to him as he gave to the creak of the floor under his feet. "He will be as unhappy here as the devil in paradise," he answered presently.

The old gentleman led me aside soon and said: "Leave the man to me. I'll give

him a scare that will move him out of this country. Anything that he can't explain will be apt to worry the old knave, and I've got a pretty surprise for him."

Night was falling and an Indian was building a fire on a low, broad rock that stood a foot or so above the garden level near the brink of the cliff, and some fifty yards in front of us. The lake shone like a polished floor in the valley, and we could see the sky and feathery pine-tops and the light of our fire in it. We sat in silence a little while and watched the leaping flames. Rone, who had been put out of his course and worried by the frankness of Gabriel Horton, knew not what to say, I fancy. He sat tapping the floor lightly with his cane.

"We expect friends to-night, and this is our beacon fire," said Horton. "Come, let us go and sit by it."

An Indian brought us fur robes, for the night was coming cold, and we took one of the garden paths and Rone followed close behind me and tried to whisper in my ear, but I would not listen. I stepped to the cliff's edge and saw how sheer the rocks fell to the water far below. My host and I sat on a rustic settle, and Rone near us in

the warm glow of the fire, and the darkness fell fast so that we could see nothing beyond the flames in a little time. An owl, in a near tree-top, filled the silence with its weird cry. The Cap'n turned suddenly and muttered an oath.

"It's the voice of a lonely spirit," said Horton. "This little isle of the sky is haunted."

"By whom?" I asked.

"The ghosts of the dead."

It was amusing then to see the old Cap'n incline his head and listen as Gabriel Horton went on:

"The ghosts of the murdered dwell here for a time after death. Often we hear their voices in the woods after nightfall, and they wail like that."

The old gentleman gave a long weird cry that rang in the still forest and died away in distant echoes. It was answered by another cry that rose half a mile or so behind the camp, I should say, and travelled far and wide in wonderful echoes.

"And if any come here who has shed human blood the spirit of his victim will appear to him and take revenge," said Gabriel Horton in a low, solemn voice.

"Hell's bells!" I heard Rone mutter as he leaned toward us on his cane, his hands trembling.

Horton continued: "Some nights I think that I can hear the voice of the old master, and the sound of his violin up in the air above the housetop. Those old pines have heard the music so long that they seem to remember it. Listen! Do you not hear the sound?"

I did hear it, or thought I did — something like a distant song in the heavens — and so declared.

"I should not be surprised to see him walk into the firelight, here, in the old familiar way."

"What! Spooks? — is it spooks ye mean, cappy?" said Rog Rone, as he moved a little nearer.

Horton disregarded the query and went on: "He left here to find Vincent and wrote to me from Liverpool that he had learned of his brother's death. He said that nobody seemed to know where you were."

We talked on for some moments and presently Cap'n Rog rose and raised his cane as if to defend himself.

"My God!" he muttered, "I'm out o' all soundinks. I'm in a harl."

He was looking over our heads at some object behind us. I turned and saw a figure approaching, in a long white robe. It strode slowly, silently into the firelight. I was dumb with amazement, for I saw Ben Lovel approaching in a long coat of white fur. A rope was wound about him at the belt. Its end was noosed and came over his shoulder and he swung it in his hand.

Rone had drawn a burning stick from the fire and was whirling its flame about him for a charm, I fancy. I can well understand his terror now, for he thought that the young man was dead and that his spirit had come down to vex him. Without a word, Ben Lovel approached Rone, the noose swaying in his hand.

The Cap'n backed away, shouting as he waved the firebrand:

"Keep off! keep off, I tell ye. I ain't done nothink at all —— "

His speech ended in a cry and down he clattered with a number of loose stones from the brink of the isle, and I saw the flash of his torch in the black gulf below, and heard the crack of his bones on the cliff-side, and the plunge and thud of his body growing fainter as he hurtled over the steep benches,

and bounded from the last of them and splashed in the water, far down at the valley's level. Then the hiss of his torch as it struck and floated.

It reminded me of that line from Milton:

"Him the Almighty Power hurled, headlong, flaming from the ethereal Sky."

All stood looking into the darkness and for half a moment no word was spoken. The shoemaker broke the silence.

"'The guilty flee when no man pursueth,'" he quoted in a low, sad voice.

He touched Horton's arm and added: "I would not have harmed a hair of his head. Let the men go look for him. They may take my rope and go over the south edge."

He unwound the rope from his body and turned and embraced me and whispered: "O, my master! I have a full heart. Come, let us go into the house."

CHAPTER XIX

PAIN had left its mark on the noble face of my friend. He was pale and a scar on his right temple showed where the cruel weapon had battered his bones. Now that I knew him to be the son of my uncle, and the great teacher in this lonely school of the wild, diverse mysteries of my later life began to vanish. I understood how it was that he had known me and Condon, and the crowd of the Council Chamber, including Rone and his stealthy crew, as one knows himself. Silently I walked beside him with a sense of awe in me. He seemed to be aware of it, for suddenly he said:

"My master, Horton, has been telling you strange things, and I hope that they will not make you love me less. I have much and I thank my Great Father for it, yet I am one who must give all for my happiness. I find the call of my task everywhere, and the peace that you have is not for me. The eyes of men do not reach out and pluck your sleeve as you pass them. You have

only to go your way and obey the call of your heart, and that is enough for you. I am as one with a million brothers, and their troubles afflict me."

I went into the house and sat on rugs of wolf-skin, before the fire, with him, knowing now what burdens of responsibility had grown out of his power. As he sat in the firelight he finished the story of our last night at the shop in Kerrigan Place.

The first blow of our stealthy foes had felled the man, Crabtree. He had suffered no serious hurt and during the struggle had crawled under the bed, where he lay concealed until the helpers of Rone had driven away with their burden. Then he came out of hiding and ran for help, leaving the door open. He returned with an officer who dragged my friend into the open air and summoned an ambulance. The little shoemaker was near death, but drugs and careful nursing and his own will to live had revived him.

Condon was on his way to Hamburg, and Lovel had said nothing of the deadly assault, preferring to deal with the guilty according to his own plans. He had sent for Crabtree and bade him hold his tongue, and the

latter had agreed to do so for a payment of twenty dollars, that being his appraisal of the damage to his own head which was hardly able "to fetch a rhyme," as he had gravely declared to my cousin.

After a week in bed Lovel had set out for his early home to rest and escape further perils.

When he was done with the telling of all this, he put his hand on my arm and said: "My master, we must be going. We shall begin the journey to-morrow, for now I am reminded of one who will need you sorely."

I looked into his eyes, my own full of wonder, I doubt not.

"Ruth needs you, and we should make haste," he added.

"Have you heard from her?"

"No, but my heart tells me that every day will increase her trouble. You will need money, and I have some in my keeping that is rightly yours."

"I need a little for my journey, for I have nothing now," was my answer. "If it be more than a small sum I beg you to keep it for your task."

"I eat the bread of toil," he said, "and have small need of money. This, that my

father bade me deliver in his name when I should find you, I have kept longer than I liked, knowing how it may rob the strong and judging poverty the safer thing for you. Now, at last, I shall ask my cousin to take his stewardship. You have not forgotten the letter that I gave you to be opened, if any harm befell me — the letter that was stolen?"

"No," I answered with keen interest.

"In that letter I directed you to this isle of the sky, and inclosed a brief account of it. I advised you to find Gabriel Horton or his brother, in the event of his death, and learn of things to your advantage. Rone had all this in his hands, and for that reason he spared your life and brought you here to us. He strove to get you in his power, so that you would propose to share your earthly goods with him, for he knew their value and where to find them. With you in his hands the task was not difficult. Rone was a cunning man."

He sat long, telling me of his will to return to the little shop, and help Condon in a new trouble that would soon be coming. He paused and I put a query which had jostled into my thoughts.

"How comes it that your name is Lovel?" I asked.

"It was the wish of my father that I should bear my mother's name, for he loved to think that I had her spirit in me, so my master, Horton, has said. Her name was Benjamina Lovel, and he called her Ben. I knew not until my return here that my name was Holm."

A little after midnight Horton entered the room and said: "We have found the captain in five fathoms of water at the foot of the cliff, and given him a decent burial. I have brought his jacket with me; I think that your money is here."

He pointed at a pocket, closed with stitches, in the lining of the old brown velvet waistcoat which the Cap'n had worn. It was now torn, and wet with lake water. He lighted a number of candles, and we sat down together at the table where I had eaten, and in half a moment our good friend had ripped this treasure pocket of the Cap'n with his hunting knife. Out came a number of odd trinkets and three sealed envelopes, and a lady's lace handkerchief, now worn and crumpled. There were cheap finger-rings and some unset jewels in a little buck-

skin sack. The envelopes were labeled as follows: "Forty the pipin," "41 the Coun-s'ler," and "Bisnis."

"Your money is in one of these," said Gabriel Horton. "We must open them."

"He often called me pippin," I suggested, as I looked at the envelope which bore the misspelled word.

Within it we found the exact sum which I had drawn from my bank the morning of that last day of mine in New York. I had planned to take it with me to my new home whither, it will be remembered, I had been about to go with Israel Horton.

The envelope labelled, "41 the Couns'ler," contained a small sum of money and an old ring of wrought gold, which had been taken from Ben Lovel.

"This is the most important of all," said Gabriel, as he ripped the "Bisnis" envelope with a slash of his hunting knife; "here we may look for something of value."

Within it were folded sheets of paper of varying size, all torn from old account-books — save one — the letter of my cousin, which Rone had taken from my trunk at the Silver Mug. The other sheets contained memoranda, which we were not able to

understand, and a letter quite plainly written, as follows:

"Ol Cap I no what yer up to, an' I wish ye good luck. I seen a letter that says ol unkle has got munny, an' I'll meet ye up in the woods for to help with the pippin. When ye hear five raps of a woodpecker like that . . . . . youl no it's me. That bisnis I went for to see to turned out good. If you play honest I will share."

I suspected at once that the above communication was from Bill Horkins, and that it related to our journey into the woods. I asked myself if it were possible that my letter to Ruth had fallen into his hands. If so, of course, it had never reached her.

While these thoughts were disturbing me, Gabriel Horton had found a curious paper and spread it on the table. It contained first, the war sign of the Toilers' Chain, and this jumble of words and figures, written neatly in a German hand:

> 38 blow flick coffer 16 Awful sanger king frill night number 42 Disturb, blow sing out overhead wilderness, sorrow blow friendship peace all memory coffer 14 geranium
>
> Rex.

"It is a cipher and may be of great value," said Ben Lovel as he bent over the paper. "It relates, I think, to that evil business of the radicals and I shall learn how to read it."

The other papers contained memoranda with little promise of value to us.

"On your way south you had best report the accident, and present this jacket and all we have found upon it to the authorities in Quebec," said Gabriel.

"But, first, I will make a copy of this cipher message," said my cousin. "It troubles me and I fear that we ought to make haste. Let us go to our beds and be up at dawn, and on the trail at sunrise."

He bade us good night and left me in grave doubt of his meaning, and with his blanket and pillow went out of doors where, under great pines that flanked the garden, he had been wont to sleep in fair weather.

Gabriel Horton went with me to my room, and said before he left me:

"The old pirate was badly broken up and I must tell you the thoughts that came to me as I put my hands upon him. 'His loom had only threads of evil to work with. It wove neither man nor beast but a thing made to give and receive violence — a kind

of devil with the eyes of a hawk and the brow of a monkey and the stealth of a cat, and a great fear in him of the souls he had sent away. Compare him with this son of light, who is here with us, and you will find a lesson as great as the gulf that lies between them."

But there were others who claimed my first thoughts, and especially one who was, no doubt, thinking very ill of me.

CHAPTER XX

THE boom of the viol string awakened me. Through pine-tops I could see the dawn-light in the sky, as I dressed, and found my cousin and his lifelong companion in the hall of the Hermitage. The packs were ready and the fire blazing, and an Indian had spread our breakfast on the table.

"The sky is clear and we shall have a fine day in the woods, my master," said Ben Lovel as he shook my hand. "I wish we might keep you here and show you this little world in the sky."

"Oh, but he will return," said Gabriel Horton, and looked at me with a smile and added: "It's a good place for a honeymoon."

"I've been thinking of that," I answered.

"Well, say to her and my brother that they will be welcome here."

A little before sunrise we descended the cliff, with two Indians to carry the packs for us, and went to the south end of the lake in canoes, and were well up in high country

before a sunbeam had touched the trail. We had fair footing and perfect weather and were near thirty miles from the isle when night overtook us. We camped by a little brook, some ten rods from the trail, and ate our suppers without a fire and silently, for at dusk my cousin had warned us to do no talking. He felt sure that the friends of Rone would be lying in wait somewhere along the trail "to help with the pippin." We lay back to rest and were suddenly startled by the woodpecker signal, that rang faintly in the darkened woods from a point half a mile or so down the trail, in the way we were heading. Tap-tap-tap, tap-tap it sounded, exactly as Horkins's letter had spaced it.

We rose to our feet, and my cousin whispered: "The knaves are near us. Come, we will post our sentinels."

He whispered for a moment to the Indians, and all tiptoed to the trail. There Lovel found a smooth place and spread a blanket and the guides lay down upon it by their rifles, and drew other blankets over them. I observed that they lay directly across the trail so that one passing in the night would be sure to stumble on them.

"We shall have new company," said my cousin, as we returned to our camp. "They may come any moment and we must not miss them."

I hoped that he would say more of our expected company, but he rolled into his blanket and lay down and said no more until we heard the signal again.

"They are no nearer and have probably stopped for the night," he whispered.

Soon he fell asleep, but I lay and listened a long time for that weird and ominous rapping in the forest.

A loud cry and the report of a rifle brought us to our feet. Dawn-light was falling through the treetops. Ben Lovel seized his rifle and passed mine to me.

"We must declare war at once," he whispered. "Follow me and I will tell you what to do, my master."

We ran toward the trail and saw the Indians with their rifles levelled at two men, who stood near them with their hands lifted above their heads. As we came closer I observed that one of them was the first mate of the *Susq* — the much cursed and abominable Bill Horkins. The other was a hard-faced man with a great, rough-skinned nose and

black, bristling moustache, whom I had seen in Rone's company at the councils of the Chain.

"Do as you are told — my men and we shall give you little trouble," said my cousin as we came near. "You will stand with the guides," he added, turning to me, "and do not fire unless I bid you do so."

He approached the cowardly and desperate men, whose hands now trembled as they looked at the lifted rifles, and said to them:

"Men, we know your plans and will take your weapons, if you please."

In half a moment he had taken two pistols and a long knife from each and flung them on the moss at our feet. He felt in all their pockets, and removed their packs and emptied them, but found only some cookies and sandwiches and three bottles of rum. These he broke on the stones, and I remember thinking that he had better have saved them, for the day's walk had wearied us and with fifty miles of hard travel ahead, the sting of the rum might bear us up a little. He unloaded the pistols and broke them and the knives on a rock and flung the fragments into a thicket.

"You may put your rifles away," he said

to us, and to our prisoners: "Sit down, my men. I want to talk with you."

Bill Horkins got command of his tongue at last.

"We didn't mean ye no harm, boss, 'fore Gawd, we didn't. We just come up here fer t' roam aroun' an' see the country, while we was waitin' fer Cap'n Rog, an' that's a fact."

"I knew not that you were in Canada, Wagner," said my cousin, addressing the other fellow. "It is but a little time since I saw you in my shop."

The man who had been looking down, with a sullen face, lifted his head quickly, and his eyes met those of Lovel, and turned away.

The latter pointed at them with his finger, and said to me:

"These are the two who struck us down in the darkness and who, thinking me dead, came here to help the captain and take their share of your money."

The men changed colour and put their hands to the ground as if about to rise and flee, their eyes wide with astonishment. In half a moment Horkins began to stammer:

"I — I — I never seen ye before, b — boss, hope to die if I did. Gawd knows we never

tried to do ye no harm — neither on' us — did we, Jim Wagner? I'd swear it on a stack o' Bibles a mile high."

Wagner shook his head and spat and gazed at the thickets with a look of injury, but said nothing.

"Thieves! liars! murderers!" said my cousin, with stern eyes upon them. "My Great Father will deal with you, and very soon, I think."

He held in his hand the waistcoat of Rog Rone, and the cipher letter which we had found in its pocket.

"Your master, Rone, is gone to his punishment," said Lovel. "On the other side of the mountains, yonder, his broken bones lie buried in the ground. We have one of his secrets here and you will know its meaning. Look at this that your hand has written, Wagner. Come with me a moment."

The man rose and went with my cousin a few paces from the trail. They stood facing each other for some five minutes and I could hear them talking together in low tones, but not a word of what they were saying. Once I saw Lovel put his hand under the chin of the wretch and lift his hanging face a little.

When they had returned, and Wagner had

sat down by his crony, Lovel called me aside, his face white as the paper on which I am writing, and whispered:

"I see it all clearly. Two are marked for death on the sixteenth of September — Horton, the millionaire, and my master, Condon. It is known, I suppose, that they will be together that day. We must hurry or we shall not save their lives. I wish to take these men with us, if possible, for there is more that we may learn. Come, we have hardly four days for our journey."

He turned to the Indians and addressed them in their own tongue. They gave us their rifles, while they made the packs ready with all haste, and we were watching the others. Soon we were off in the trail, our prisoners ahead and we behind them, with our rifles, and the guides close at our heels. So we hurried along at such a pace that the knaves began to lag and hurl oaths at us, and before midday they sat down, cursing, and refused to go any farther. We were now in serious trouble, and left the Indians on guard, and went down the trail a few paces for a word of counsel together.

"Why not go on and abandon them?" I suggested.

"It will give them a chance to undo my plans," he answered. "If all goes well with us we shall draw the fangs of a whole pack of them. We must leave these men, but keep command of them. The Indians will take them far off the trail and detain them where, surrounded by the mystery of the woods, they will not be able to find their way, until we have seen my master, Condon. I know a lonely lake where they could live by hunting and fishing."

So, after my cousin had talked with his guides a moment, we left them and the others sitting comfortably at the top of a high hill, and resumed our journey. We walked fast and planned to travel with torches after nightfall, and make no stop until we could rest our legs in a steam-car. Late in the afternoon two rifle shots came echoing through the forest from a point not half a mile behind us. We halted, looking back in the trail and listening, but heard no other sound.

"I wonder what that may mean," Lovel whispered. "There's a hint of evil in it."

He gave a loud halloo, but got no answer.

"I think that I know what has happened," he said presently. "They had other bottles

of liquor hidden by the trail somewhere. We were probably near it when they refused to go on. Our Indians have tasted the fire-water and that would undo them. I fear that they have lost their rifles and their lives also."

"It may be hunters," I suggested; "or perhaps the Indians were shooting at some animal."

I observed that my companion was worried. He beckoned to me and we walked back in the trail a few paces. Suddenly he stopped, and whispered:

"We must go on. If they have overpowered the Indians they will lie in wait for us, and we must guard our lives, my master, for the sake of our friends."

We hurried along until our mouths were dry with thirst and came to a little brook in the dusk of the evening.

It had cut a deep gorge below us and we made our way through thickets and down to the water level, and leaned our rifles on the rock wall and drank eagerly, with our mouths in the ripples. We had slaked our thirst and lay resting in a covert of young pines, and suddenly my ear caught a sound not of our making. It was like the tread

of muffled feet in the trail, and if we had not been lying with our heads to the ground I am sure we would not have heard it. Lovel rose and stepped stealthily into the open gorge, and I followed him. In the dim light we could discern two figures moving noiselessly up the trail in the direction whence we had come.

"They go like ghosts," Lovel whispered, and, indeed, their noiseless feet and dim figures, and a faint sound like that of the rustle of skirts, were uncanny, and quickened my heart a little. Lovel stepped farther into the open, straining his eyes. In half a moment the dim figures vanished in the dusk and silence. Suddenly my companion turned to me and whispered:

"Let us get the rifles."

The dusk had thickened, and to that circumstance, I doubt not, we owed our lives. I had scarcely lifted my foot when, bang! bang! went two rifles, not fifty feet away, and their bullets sang above our heads and slapped the rocks beyond us. Our enemy had aimed too high, as always happens to those unaccustomed to night shooting.

My heart skipped a beat or two, and

Lovel gave my arm a pull and I understood him, and down we went in the edge of the water as if we had been shot. We began to crawl toward the thicket, but our enemy was nearer than we thought and would be upon us before we could make half the distance, or even get to our feet.

At the same instant both Lovel and I seemed to perceive the hopelessness of our plight, and sank down at the water's edge like men who are dead. I had no doubt that Horkins and Wagner had got ahead of us and had been lying in ambush, and this notion flashed upon me: If they thought us dead they might give us a chance to reach our rifles. I know now that Lovel had another and a better hope in his mind, and neither moved a muscle.

"We've got 'em," said the voice of Bill Horkins as they descended the rocks on the farther side of the gorge. "If ary one gives a move put another charge in him, an' we'll be sure this time -- so we will, Jim Wagner. I'm goin' t' split their heads open an' cut out their hearts an' burn the rest of 'em hide an' hair, and sink their bones in the brook. That's five deaths an' it orto hold 'em down. Rog Rone is out o'

the game — we ain't got to divvy no more with him, er be feared o' havin' a knife rammed into yer back some day. I ain't took a dozen steps in five year without lookin' behind me."

They had come close and I was about to spring up and fight for our lives when two rifles roared just behind us and the men fell and floundered like wounded deer in the water. In a second, one of them rose and ran in the bed of the brook and presently sprang into the thickets. Then I heard a voice that was like sunshine breaking the walls of night.

"Run, ye brats o' hell," it shouted.

I struggled to my knees and saw Wave Larriper bending over me. Lovel had risen and picked up the rifles of the wounded men which had fallen near us.

"Poor lads! are yez hurted?" called the voice of Cap'n Larriper from the top of the gorge.

"No," I answered.

"Thank God! Come out o' there quick as yez can. I'll stand here with me rifle and take a crack at the villains if they come back."

We clambered to the top of the gorge.

Lovel took Wave's hand in his and turned to me and said:

"This is she I befriended that night we rode with the Colonel. It is she who could hardly be forgiven by any of her brothers in this great family of ours."

He spoke very tenderly and dried her eyes with his handkerchief, for she stood sobbing at his side.

Then he took the hand of Mrs. Larriper and said:

"Good mother! I knew that you were near us."

"Whin we was goin' by we seen a stir in the bush," said she, "so down we drops on our hands and knees wid our pop-guns ready an' crack wint their rifles an' we knew the divvle was up. Whin ol' Horkins got down off the rocks we spit the lead into 'em for we thought yez was kilt entirely an' — praise God! — yez seem to be well as ever — both o' yez — jisht!"

I took the hand of the "lady cook" and put my arm around her neck and kissed her, and spoke the best compliment that I could think of and she gave me a playful poke on the shoulder and exclaimed: "Blarney!"

Lovel turned to Wave and her mother, and asked:

"Are you both strong enough to walk through the night?"

"Aye, an' a bit to spare," said Cap'n Larriper.

I promptly assured him that I favoured a change of climate, and he said:

"Then we shall hurry on. By sunrise we should be near the railroad."

We made some torches and hastily gathered up our packs and rifles and hurried to the trail.

Cap'n Larriper had known worried days since I left the *Susquehanna*, and told their story as we walked. Horkins had returned to the ship one day with a stranger. That evening they disappeared, and in the middle watch the ship caught fire and burned at her dock. In escaping Horkins had dropped his waistcoat on the deck and Cap'n Larriper had picked it up, and found in one of its pockets the evidence which had sent her to the wild country in quest of me. My letter to Ruth and another from Rone, asking "for help with the pippin," were in a hidden pocket under its lining. Learning next day that Horkins and his companion had brought rifles and pro-

visions and left the city, she and her daughter and a guide had set out in the trail to Lac Crèche, where she knew that I had gone with the Cap'n. They had dismissed their guide after a day's travel, confident of their ability to keep the trail.

A little after dark one evening they had come so near the campfire of Wagner and Horkins that they could hear their voices. Wave and her mother had been drawn from their trail by the firelight and had gone back a little and put up for the night. They had heard the others leaving long before sunrise and when light came they had been delayed an hour or so in looking for the trail. So they had fallen far behind and we had heard them passing our ravine in the dusk.

That night, as we hurried on, my cousin explained to me that he had asked Mrs. Larriper to apply to Rone for employment as cook on the *Susquehanna*. Condon had suggested the plan, desiring information as to the business of the "Cap'n" and his ship. The character and the peril of her task were fully explained to Mrs. Larriper but she had the courage to undertake it.

"I will tell you why we chose her for this work," Lovel added. "Rone's easy

gallantries — set forth in your sketch of him — suggested that a woman with quick wit and a strong arm would be able to control him, as Mrs. Larriper has done. Nevertheless, she knows that the paths of the strong lead to peril and that we must run with patience the race that is set before us."

She interrupted the narrative to declare that she could stand danger better than dirt, and went on to say that the filthy condition of the old ship had "druv her mad," and when she asked to be set ashore, the Cap'n had coolly informed her that, if she went, she would have to swim. So she had gone on and made the best of a bad bargain.

Our talk wore the night away and made us forget our weariness, and soon after sunrise we were aboard the cars on our way to Quebec.

CHAPTER XXI

WE TOOK the first train for New York, and all slept the journey through, save myself. We arrived in the middle of the afternoon of the fifteenth of September — a day of great trial for me, with its final hours so full of uncertainty. I left my companions at the depot, having promised to see Horton as soon as possible, and go to the Lanthorne at ten o'clock, for a talk with Lovel. I went to an inn and then to a tailor's shop, for with all my hardships I was scarcely fit to be seen by gentlefolk, and I had begun to feel the vanity of a bird preparing for his summer shine.

It was growing dark when I rang at the door of Israel Horton. The old butler opened it, and said that he would take my name to his master. On his return he looked at me as if I were no better than the doormat, and said:

"Mr. Horton cannot see you."

"Tell him that he must see me; I have

business that cannot be delayed," was my answer.

The great man gave me no greeting when I entered his room.

"I should think you would hesitate to face me," he said sternly.

"On the contrary, I have been working hard for the pleasure," said I.

"I am not greatly complimented, young man. Please tell me your business."

He had not asked me to sit down. I stood facing him, unhorsed and trying to command myself, for my emotions had been rising since I entered his door.

"You misjudge me," I began; whereupon he interrupted by again demanding my business.

I heard the rustle of a woman's skirt, and suddenly Ruth hurried into the room, and what a splendour I saw in her face that moment! She took my hand and gravely looked into my eyes, and for a second not a word was spoken. She turned to her father and tried to be very cheerful as she said:

"Sit down, gentlemen, and make yourselves at home. I will ring for some tea."

"Perhaps, I had better see you alone," I suggested to her father.

"I shall not leave you alone together," said Ruth. "I am afraid that you would both be torn to pieces."

"Go ahead, boy; I hope it's nothing to be ashamed of," said Horton.

Then out came my story in a rush of vivid sentences, that ran on for an hour or so, like a mountain brook in the spring, and brought them both to my side. In the midst of it Horton wrung my hand and declared that I should go no further until I had forgiven his rudeness, while Ruth walked slowly across the room with her handkerchief to her eyes. When all was told about Rone, the *Susquehanna*, Lovel, and Gabriel Horton, and the Isle of the Sky — and I had come as near the end of my story as my understanding would let me, I paused and Israel Horton said:

"Condon arrives to-morrow afternoon and I am to meet the steamer and drive here with him. They have planned to throw a bomb at the carriage. Holm, you should thank God that you are not a rich man."

"Poverty has its advantages," I said, and rose to go. "Can you meet me at the Lanthorne at ten to-night? Lovel will await us there."

"I will meet you at the Lanthorne at ten o'clock," he answered, as he put his arm about me and started for the door, and added: "Boy, I hope the next chapter in your story may be a happy one. If there is anything I can do to make it so, I shall be glad."

"I may have a request to make of you as soon as this danger is past," I said.

"I'll give you anything but my daughter," he warned me.

I wondered if he would have me understand that I had returned too late — and lost her. The fear cut deep in me, but I could see no chance of relief, for my friend, pale with horror, had sent for his secretary, and Ruth had left the room in tears, having been cautioned by her father to say nothing of what she had heard. So I left the house and hastened to the lodgings of Colonel Christmas, and had a quiet dinner with him, and gave a brief account of myself, and learned of all that had happened in the School for Novelists. Darklight had published a great book and Pipps had made the world laugh with a series of satirical tales. The school would meet again Saturday night, when Condon was to be present and tell of his trip abroad.

"Sir, you must go and bring Lovel, and we'll make a night of it!" the Colonel exclaimed.

I promised to go, if possible, and a little before ten set out for the Sign of the Lanthorne. The shades of the club-room were drawn close, and within I found my cousin sitting at its big round table, with the innkeeper.

We were scarcely done with our greeting when Horton entered in a faded derby hat and the great-coat of a coachman. He greeted Lovel warmly, and flung off his hat and top-coat saying, as he took a chair at the table:

"The next best thing to poverty is its resemblance." He turned to Lovel and said: "I've been hearing of that wonderful home in the sky, and I have a great favour to ask."

Lovel said for an answer: "You would like to go there, and you would be most welcome in my house, and my master, Gabriel, the happiest of men for even a look at you. He fears that you are so in love with grandeur that you would find no joy in his way of life, and try to take him out of it."

"On the contrary, it is the kind of thing

I long for," said Horton. "I want to get away from my money and all its perils and responsibilities — from beggars, liars, sycophants and those who are rotten with envy and who hate me because I have succeeded. When I heard of that home of yours — my God! boy, it put me in mind of Paradise."

"But it is an expensive place," said Lovel. "Not one of us could afford to live there for more than a little time."

We looked into his eyes, not quite aware of his meaning.

"It would cost more than we could pay — our strength, our happiness, our very heart's desire," Lovel added.

"How so?" was the query of Horton.

"Because you would find no beggars, liars, and sycophants there — no envy, no hatred, no peril, no work, no reason why you should be there save for a day or two of rest. Paradise is not in the Isle of the Shy. It is in our task or it is not in this world. My father found his work there and was content, and as to your brother — his work is finished. We should find only rest and beauty and comfort in the Isle of the Sky, and they are not enough for us

I had to leave it and seek to know why I was living."

"And not all the money in the world could turn you from your task," said Horton, as he looked with wonder into the face of the clear-eyed youth beside him.

"No, nor any pain or fear," said Lovel modestly, and many times I have thought of those words of his.

A stern-looking man of middle-age, with keen, gray eyes and silvered hair, had entered the room and closed its door behind him and was approaching us.

"Well, now for our night's work," said Horton, as he rose and shook the stranger's hand, and presented him as Chief Burns, by which we knew that we were addressing the chief of police.

"I believe you are right," said the latter, turning to Horton, at once, regarding the matter in hand, as we sat down. "They'll throw a bomb at the carriage."

"And you must get the bomb-thrower or I might as well jump overboard," said Horton. "A life of fear is hardly worth living."

"I have taken a step to that end by arresting your coachman," said the keen-eyed man.

Horton rose, dumb with amazement, and paced the floor.

"He has given me the whole story," the chief went on: "There are five anarchists who are booked for this job besides the coachman, and I have their names here."

He read from a note-book as follows:

"William Horkins, Heinrich Wagner, Roger Rone, Jacob Fischer, and an unknown man. He closed the book and added: "The unknown man is the bomb-thrower - - no doubt of that. Even your coachman does not know who will throw it. He drives away from the pier in the direction of your home by a certain route. At some point a man will signal him with three blasts on a whistle. He jumps from the box and runs, and off goes the bomb, and the carriage is up in the air and comes down in a thousand pieces. Now, we must send the carriage home empty and let them blow it up, and get the bomb-thrower, if we can. I'll post a hundred men in plain clothes along the route, and send one on a bicycle to follow the carriage. I have promised to let up on the coachman if we succeed, and he has agreed to help us. He's as keen as we are to get the right man."

"Where is the coachman — isn't he in my stable?" Horton asked.

"Yes; and two of my men are helping him with the chores. You must go to the wharf to-morrow as if you knew nothing of all this. I'll be there and tell you what to do. I've only one fear about it."

"What is that?"

"The coachman is a coward and his nerve may fail him. When he gets to the wharf there may be something wrong with the harness or the carriage. But I will do my best to take care of that. I have a coupé, that looks like yours, with steel shutters and spring locks on the doors, and it would take a safe-cracker with all his tools to break out of that little wagon. It's a portable jail and very handy in a crowd. I'll have it standing on the dock with an extra set of harness. If any of that gang should show up there I'll shove 'em into it where they won't make us any trouble until they go to headquarters."

The conference added nothing more to the material of my history save that our host sent in a bite of supper over which we sat talking until midnight, and I told again of all our adventures with Horkins, Rone and Wagner.

The story of Wave and Mrs. Larriper reached the heart of the millionaire.

"I have a freight line on the lakes," he suggested; "send them to my office in Chicago and I will see that they have employment and a home on one of our boats."

"It will be a blessing to them if you are good enough to see that they are kindly treated," said my cousin. "They love the sea, and a task among cleanly people is the thing I wish for them."

Horton scribbled an order for their passes, and rose quickly and put on his coat and hat and bade us good night.

"I'm glad you did as I told you," said the chief, as he shook hands with the millionaire. "Plain clothes won't hurt you any and walking will do you good."

"Oh, I wore a jumper long before I ever saw a dress suit!" said Horton, as he hurried away.

The chief followed half a moment or so behind him.

Lovel and I went to the little shop. It was much as we had left it, save that Wave and Mrs. Larriper had been there sweeping, dusting and scrubbing the rooms, and had

put a vase of flowers on the bedroom table, and doilies of their own making on the chairs.

"It looks very cozy," I said.

"Yes, and I love this little home, but I have not long to stay here."

"Why? It will be no more a place of peril, I hope."

"But I must go where I may better serve my brothers," he answered, as he began to pace the floor.

We heard footsteps on the stairs, and when I opened the door Wave and Mrs. Larriper stood before me.

"God bless yez both," said the "lady cook," as they entered. "We spint the evenin' with Mis' Kerrigan acrost the way, an' seen the light in yer windies an' stepped in t' ax if we can come to-morry an' tidy the place a bit more. We'll bring some trinkets along an' a few little knickknacks that'll make it more like a home."

"Dear friend, it is good enough," said Lovel. "My home is not here, and henceforth I know not where it will be. I have found a place for you both on a big, clean ship that carries freight on the Great Lakes."

"Ah, ye're a wonderful lad — jisht!" said

Mrs. Larriper, as she stood with her hands clasped and looked into the eyes of Lovel, with tears in her own. "I could kiss the soles o' yer feet, man, I love ye so, for all ye've done for us. How can I pay the debt I owe ye?"

"By helping some other in need," said my cousin. "Good mother, go you to your task to-morrow. This will give you tickets, and tell you whom to look for at the end of your journey and where to find them." He gave her the order and certain directions which the millionaire had prepared. "I may never see you again, but I am sure that I shall have good news of you."

Then I saw what filled me with wonder and surprise. The girl knelt at his feet, in tears, and kissed the sleeve of his coat, and the face of the young man glowed with a beauty and a tenderness beyond any words of mine. He spoke not for half a moment, and then very calmly, in a low, gentle tone, as he raised the girl to her feet.

"Dear child! I have only paid my debt to you, and you owe me nothing. Go to your task and forget me, but remember what I have said."

"I shall be at the Silver Mug. Let me

know when your train goes and I shall be there to bid you good-bye again," I said, as I shook their hands.

Lovel went to the landing with them, and I heard Mrs. Larriper say: "May the good God help an' bless an' keep ye, boy."

"I doubt not He will," said Ben Lovel, as he came away.

I turned to him and said: "My master, it is a great thing to have others do your praying for you."

It was the first time that I had so addressed him, for the day had come when I had begun to think of him as my master.

We closed the shop and walked to the Silver Mug and spent the rest of the night there.

CHAPTER XXII

IT WAS near midday when we left our beds. Word had come to me, soon after nine o'clock, that Condon's ship would reach her dock at five, and that Mrs. Larriper and Wave would be leaving the Central Station at two. After breakfast I said to my cousin:

"Let us go and make our adieux to the Larripers."

"I think that you would best go alone," he answered, and left me little doubt of his meaning when he added: "I do not wish to increase their sadness or my own."

On my return I found him writing, and presently we sent for saddle-horses, and bade the grooms meet us at four o'clock in front of the pier, where Condon was expected, and hold our horses there until we were ready for them. I had the notion that with horses we could follow the doomed carriage and assist in the capture of the bomb-thrower.

We reached the pier at four-thirty, and

found the grooms, and dismounted and left the animals in their charge. We passed the customs gate and stood where we could see every comer. A group of men followed us, and then "the Chief" arrived in a glittering coupé, and we saw him alight, and address his coachman, who immediately drove aside and unhitched his horses and took them away. Some dock men backed the vehicle behind a pile of freight, near a wall of the pier house. The chief quickly drew its shutters and closed its door with a bang. Then he beckoned to me and said in a low tone:

"I'll make you a deputy. There is my little jail. Stay near it, sir. I might need your help. Here's a key to the carriage, and if you get tired unlock its door and take a seat inside. The steamer will be late."

The pier was rapidly filling with eager and excited people, come to greet their friends, and I heard many say that the ship was then coming up the river. They crowded to the pier's end to observe her approach. I saw Horton pass hurriedly, as I stood by the carriage door. I waited until the sun was low and gloomy shadows had begun to fall around me. Thoughts

of the dark tragedy that threatened, of the darker souls, damned with devils' hate and bitterness who had planned it, filled the hour with a kind of fever. In the midst of it I saw Ruth Horton passing alone, and ran to her side. She was pale with anxiety, and her hand trembled when I took it.

"He forbade me; he forbade me to come here," she said; "but I had to come, or I am sure that my thoughts would have killed me. I want to be at his side."

"You are his best protector, if he only knew it," I said, for, as I looked at the sweet, girlish figure I knew that if it stood beside him he would be safe, for surely no man could raise a hand to harm her.

"But I fear that he would lose his nerve if he were to see you here," I urged. "I think you'd best go home; we will look out for your father."

"I am faint and almost dead with fear," she whispered. 'My knees tremble and my feet are heavy as lead."

I opened the door and asked her to sit down and compose herself in the carriage. She stepped in, and I partly closed the door, and as I turned, Lovel came running toward me.

"Horkins and Fischer are here," he whispered.

We hurried in among the crowd at the dock's end, to find the chief and inform him of our discovery. The vessel was in her slip and the crowd moving to the gangways. Five minutes had passed before we found the chief, who stood where the first-cabin passengers would land, with the millionaire beside him.

"I know they are here and we shall have them in a minute," he said, when I had imparted our information. "They've taken alarm and my men will get them at the gate. Run out there, and if you see them, do what you can to help."

We ran to the gate and there were the "plain clothes men" — half a dozen of them staring into the faces of all who passed. Two of them approached us.

"You are the man who knows Horkins?" one of them said to me.

"Yes," I answered, as the officers gathered about us.

"Stand here, and if they try to pass, point them out to these men," he said as he ran down the pier.

We stood through slow, grinding minutes,

alert and fierce as a tiger ready for its spring, and by and by the officer returned.

"They're not on this pier," he said.

"I saw them in the crowd," Lovel assured him.

"Then they've taken to the water. I know them well and so do three of the other boys, and we've covered every foot of the pier."

A pair of black horses came swiftly toward us, and we sprang aside and they rushed by and clattered off in the dusk. As they flashed through the glow of a great arc-light above us, I had recognized Horton's coachman on the box. Right then my fear grew to a kind of panic — I could not have told why. I caught the officer's arm and my words stumbled out of me.

"Look here — look here — was — was that Horton's coupé?"

"No; Horton's had a broken pole and they put his horses on the chief's coupé."

I ran through the gate and sprang to the back of my horse, that stood near, and dashed away in pursuit, for suddenly I had thought of the girl dearer than my life to me, whom I had concealed in the "little jail." I had forgotten her, and she might

lose her life and I all hope of happiness, and so I dug the spurs in my horse and shouted a warning and dashed away. I knew the coachman's route along which the chief's men were posted, and fortunately there were few in the streets. On I went, lashing and shouting, to keep people out of my way, until, after a minute or so of this kind of thing, I began to check my horse seeing the carriage ahead of me. It was now quite dark, and I could see no other sign of life in the streets — save lights in the windows — and I was passing the rear wheels of the coupé, and had heard the voices of men in it calling for help, and had taken breath for a shout to the driver, when the whistle sounded and I saw him leap from his box. Some fifty feet ahead of me a man was running toward the carriage. I spurred my horse and rushed toward him, as I heard his cry:

"I am the vengeance of God!"

I saw the quick jerk of his arm, and my boot struck him and down he went. Then it seemed to me that the earth had split asunder and that I heard voices shouting in the midst of hell. The rent pavements roared aloft in a blinding flash of light and showered about me. A breath or two of silence and

the street was full of echoes — shouts and cries, the beat of night sticks and of running feet. I was lying on the sidewalk with one leg under my horse. I pulled free and got to my feet unharmed but like one stricken with madness. At least a hundred men and women, some with lighted lanterns, were standing about the dead horses and the wrecked coupé and a black hole in the earth. I pushed in among them, and heard myself calling loudly:

"Is she dead and the whole city destroyed?"

The chief put his hand on my shoulder and gave me a shake, and I heard him say: "You're all right, old man," and suddenly I recovered my senses.

"We're picking up your friends, Horkins and Fischer," said the chief. "They were in the coupé and have been flung all over the neighbourhood."

"They were in the coupé!" I exclaimed, and the joyous thought came to me that Ruth had left it and gone home while we were looking for the chief.

"You must have left the door open," he went on. "They hid in the coupé while we were after them, and locked themselves in without knowing it."

"And where is the bomb-thrower?" I asked.

"Killed by his own bomb," the chief answered. "One of my men saw you knock him down before he could get out of the way. Your horse was going so fast that he carried you out of danger."

CHAPTER XXIII

NEXT morning the papers made a better hero of me than I have yet made of myself, for I have done nothing in all my life which would have halted any man of common courage. The reporters, all of whom I knew, would give us no peace and we escaped from the Mug, soon after midnight, and drove to an inn in upper Broadway.

About ten o'clock in the morning I set out for the Horton home, determined to end my suspense that day, if possible. I met Ruth on the avenue within a block of the house.

"My hero!" she exclaimed, "I knew that you would be coming and I have patrolled the block for an hour, so that I wouldn't miss you."

We turned into a side street, now quite deserted, and she explained that she had left the carriage in a moment or two after I had partly closed its door upon her, and seeing nothing of me had returned to her home.

I said not a word of my panic and the wild ride on which it had sent me.

"This is good luck," I said, after a silence. "I must have a talk with you. I'm going to rebel and declare my independence if it costs my head. Your father is a tyrant."

"And you a hasty young man. Shame on you — my father is your friend."

"Then your mother is the proud and haughty one. I suggest that we rebel and strike for liberty."

She smiled, and looked into my eyes and saw there all that I wished to tell her.

"Don't say a word," she cautioned me. Then, "Didn't you know?" she added with a troubled look in her face. "Is it possible you didn't know that I am to be married soon?"

I turned and looked at her with a heart of lead in me.

"You are not so clever as I thought," she remarked with a sigh. "I was sure that you knew all about it."

"Ruth! I can't believe you. If I did, I should want to die."

"Nonsense; you may be the most cheerful man at the wedding, if you will. You see, if you do not want me, I am sure that the Prince does."

Making love in the street has its disadvantages and I felt them keenly, but

better there than nowhere, let me assure you, dear reader.

"I ought to have understood you," I said, in the happiest moment of my life.

"You had a riddle to solve and you did it rather badly," she complained with a pretty smile, and took my arm. "But never mind; you will know women better by and by."

"Divination is well enough, but now for plain talk and plenty of it," I said. "I want to talk with you for the next fifty years, at least, and we might begin to-day, with a formal interview at the minister's."

"I'm surprised at you — a member of the School for Novelists!" she whispered. "Don't you know that her wedding is a woman's great event? Think of the gifts, and the gowns, and how grand I shall look and how all the young ladies will envy me! Think of the joy of my friends, and the misery of my aunts and cousins! You wouldn't deprive me of all that? Think of my pride, too, in going to the altar with a fine young man! — a handsome young man! who, as he stands at my side, will look like a toy soldier! Now, don't you see that you haven't a leg to stand on?"

I had to admit it.

"Boy, I congratulate you," said Israel Horton, as we entered his room that morning. "You did your work well. I couldn't be more sure of your mettle if you had spent a year in the shops."

"You funny man!" said Ruth, as she patted the cheek of her father. "You think that every boy must be made in a shop, because you were."

"Great girl! great girl, young man!" he exclaimed. "I wish you would help me manage her, for God knows, I have enough to do now. I must look out, boy, that she doesn't fall into the hands of some worthless fellow."

"Father, I'm saved!" said Ruth. "He has consented to marry me himself."

"What, my girl!"

"I am surrounded by so many perils — fools, princes, profligates — and he by so many pretty girls!"

"Do you mean to tell me that you are engaged?"

She held her cheek against his and said: "Father, we have risen in our wrath and decided to throw off the yoke of oppression, and marry each other."

"I ought to be mad, but I control myself,"

he answered with a smile. "Go and make your peace with the old girl, and may God bless you!"

"Come," said she, taking my arm and smiling up at me.

"There's one preliminary," I said, as I held her close and covered her face with kisses.

"That's business!" said Horton with a laugh. "Boy, you'll make a successful husband."

"I thought he was going to forget it, didn't you, father?" she remarked playfully. "You see, our love-making has been done by telepathy — there was no other way. Volumes of tender thought and affection have passed between us, and we understand each other, but the poor fellow has never had a chance to kiss me until now."

"One kiss is better than a year of telepathy," her father asserted. Then he turned to me and said: "Young man, I've been with you from the start, and I shall be glad to take you into the family, but you must get her mother's consent before this goes any further."

"Come on," Ruth whispered.

"Look here, boy," said Israel Horton, "you'll want to borrow some money."

"I think not," was my answer. "I have a little that my uncle left me."

"And we're both willing to begin poor," said Ruth. "We've considered all that by telepathy."

Horton laughed immoderately and said: "You'll get sick of poverty, my girl."

"But there'll be no danger of being blown up," she laughed.

"The danger is not passed," I said; "not until we are done with your mother."

Horton smote the arm of his chair by way of applause.

"Young man," he said, "you may need a faster horse than you rode last evening."

"Come," said Ruth, as she took my arm again, "be brave."

I had known some perils, but this made me tremble.

"I will try; but, my dear, I am horribly afraid of your mother," I confessed with honest trepidation.

"Be gentle but firm while you present your manifesto," she urged. "I will be the populace and roar my approval. Come, let us go and find her."

It is only necessary for me to say that we were able to make terms with her, by which she relinquished all hope of any grander name for Ruth than that of plain Mrs. Richard Holm.

CHAPTER XXIV

"That man is great, and he alone,
Who serves a greatness not his own
For neither praise nor pelf;
Content to know and be unknown,
Whole in himself."
OWEN MEREDITH (*Lord Lytton*)

I SAID in the beginning that this narrative was copied in part from the minutes of that little coterie of good fellows, known long ago as the School for Novelists, in which I began to study men and the art of describing them. Now, as I turn the record of these nights at the Sign of the Lanthorne, I come to one, fast by the oracle of God, toward which these little streams have been flowing, all unknown to me.

Neither my quest, nor the misbehaviours of Rone and his bloody faction, nor the tragic adventures into which they led me, nor my lucky and singular romance, would have tempted me to this task I am now completing. But an unexpected hour has sent me back upon every stream of circumstance that made it possible, and here,

in the musty old minute-book, is the precise moment of its beginning. And we read:

"The clock strikes eleven, and the long hand has begun its round in a little cycle of history. It is the closing hour of the nineteenth of September, 1885. The great oak-like Condon sits in the firelight with Lovel, who looks frail as a reed beside him.

"Condon rises and tells of his travels abroad, of the love of strangers, of honours and offers of help that were showered upon him, of the growing spirit of peace and brotherhood among men.

"'It has touched me,' he said, "to learn that I have the confidence and good opinion of so many people. But I am more deeply gratified to learn that I have, at last, the confidence and good opinion of myself. It may be that I shall learn to-morrow that I have exchanged the one for the other — that I have lost the whole world, as it were, to gain my own soul. Nevertheless, I shall think it a good bargain. And now, young men, it is my duty to tell you as strange a tale as you ever imagined, I can well believe.

"'I had great ambitions when I began my work. I caught the zeal of fanatics, but kept a cool head. To that I owed my

success as a leader. I let nothing stand between me and my aim, for was it not a righteous aim, approved by God himself? And had I not high and ample authority for achieving it by any means, however bloody they might be? I asked myself, if I were not fighting the enemies of the Most High, and I made ready for war upon them with no more thought of my error than had Saul of old, when he went to slay the Amalekites. I found myself surrounded with the vengeful and bloodthirsty, and I became a tyrant in my effort to control them.

"'Then I met a man who looked into my soul, and saw its blackness, and began to turn me from my purpose with gentle words. Somehow, he had learned my plans, and they grieved him. Day and night he followed me, pleading for peace when I could see no hope of it. At first, I feared the boy; then I began to love him and to hear the call of my conscience in his voice.

"'By and by he brought to me a manuscript in which he had set forth a plan of campaign for me and my army — a plan of help and not of warfare. He suggested that I publish it as a declaration of the hopes

and views of my council. This I could not do, but offered to find a publisher for the book, and give it public approval, and commend its teachings to the brotherhood of the Toilers' Chain.

"'"I agree," he said, "on condition that you do not use my name."

"'"Why shall I not use your name?" I asked.

"'"It would injure me, and do the book no credit," he answered.

"'"Injure you!" I exclaimed. "Why, man! It may bring you wealth and great renown."

"'"So I fear," he said to me, and I remember every word and tone, and the look of his face, when he answered: "Wealth and great renown are not for me. They make one a slave, and I would serve a greater Master."

"'It was strange, incredible and beyond my comprehension — this great, unselfish soul which had come and laboured with me, seeking not its own. But, now, I see its wisdom. I have felt its power sweeping over the wide earth.

"'People would have it that I wrote the book, although I was not base enough to claim the honour, nor good enough to disclaim it. Suddenly, I was whirled into

the skies. Men of power and place, against whom I had planned a war more terrible than any in history, began to help and trust me. Kings and presidents applauded me; millionaires began to support my cause. They had disarmed me; they were my friends, and I could not give them battle. They overcame me with their love and bounty. They would have it that I was a great man, and such, with all my heart, I tried to be. How could I say or do a thing not approved by the gospel of this book, that was said to be mine? I had to talk it, think it, live it, love it. My friends, I was like a bull shorn of its horns. I could not move, save in the way of kindness. Consider this wonderful thing: Here was I, prepared for war, and with no enemy — armed for vengeance and subdued by love, for all good men were trying to help me. I saw that the God of Samuel was not mine. I felt a new power in my heart. I was a man of peace. Those set on vengeance sought to take my life, and the worst of them have perished through their own folly, and some of you have seen their end. I saw that the poor had been fooled and driven like cattle — that the rich were suspicious, and that both

were looking for a trusty hand, a voice of authority to make peace between them. Such they thought mine to be. They have welcomed, they have exalted me — unworthy as I am.

"'I have seen hatred dying out of the world. I have witnessed the coming of a new resolve; that there is one treasure which no nation may rightly barter away, not for glory nor pride nor added territory — the lives and honour of its citizens.

"'These things that I have seen and felt have lifted me above myself. Now, I am strong enough to confess my folly and renounce it. Henceforth, I must be what I am to all the world — a little man of many faults and vanities, but doing my best with them.

"'When I look at the slender youth who sits beside me here — this great-souled man whose love has held me, like a strong but gentle arm, and turned me to its bidding — this modest, silent man who would be the least of all and is yet the greatest, as I verily believe, I cannot hold my peace. Ben Lovel, brother of all men, deliverer of my soul and body, stand up — stand up, I say, and take your greatness on you, while I take my shame.'

"The speaker sat down, and Lovel rose in a deep silence, and stood for a moment looking thoughtfully at the fire; and not one who sat there has forgotten the calm of his face as the light shone upon it.

"'John Condon, for your sake, I am glad of that you have done,' he said. 'I knew that this triumphant hour was coming. Good master, you have put down your last and greatest foe, and your shame is like a crown upon your head. It is little that I have done, and I shall take no sign of greatness.

"'You have known not what to think of me — a man who turned from wealth and fame and many cherished things, but I tell you, it is because I have seen how dearly one has to pay for them. Then, too, I spent my youth where a man has neither need nor knowledge of the things you love, nor any vanities.

"'I came out of my woodland home with no weariness of men, but with a great will to help them. I found the nations of the earth filled with evil of their own making. I heard the King say: "Thou shalt not kill" save when I command it; "thou shalt not steal" from any but my enemies; "thou shalt not bear false witness" save it be to

serve your country; "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself," but thou shalt obey me and slay thy neighbour and offend thy God if I bid thee do it.

"'I saw them building, slowly building in the hearts of men, respect for human life and property, and tearing it down with murder, lust, and pillage. I saw each with one hand pointing to the way of righteousness, and with the other to the way of evil, so that the people were confused and knew not in whom to put their trust. My brothers, I have seen all this that makes a plaything of the soul of man and its great Father, and therein, I pray, you may find a task, as I have, and forget yourselves.'"

He ceased, and we had heard the last of his voice forever, although we knew it not. We sat in silence, thinking — thinking, as we looked at him, and the clock struck twelve, and the Colonel dismissed us solemnly. My cousin pressed my hand and left me, as if in haste to be gone.

Since then, I have sought him in many places far and near. Once I heard of a great teacher who dwelt among the poor, in a distant capital, and cared not for wealth

or fame, and taught from the book of the little shoemaker. I found the teacher, and he said to me:

"No, I am not the man you seek, but only his follower."

And I heard of a parliament of nations, gathered to open the hearts of their best men on the subject of human brotherhood and peace forever, and I hoped to find him there, but found only his spirit and his words.

Now, the rich man gives of his abundance, and the bitterness of the poor is passing, and the thunderbolts of their wrath no longer shake the cities, and good will is spreading to the ends of the earth.

So Ben Lovel lives and will live, and I know that his great soul is yet here in its slender home, doing its work humbly and forgetting itself and all that is his, including my love, for the sake of his many, many brothers.

Once a year we go to the Isle of the Sky. Ruth loves it, even more than I, but not more than a fortnight's cruise, which we take every summer with Cap'n Larriper, who commands a vessel on the lakes, and Wave, the handsome wife of the first mate.

There is a nook in the woods near the Hermitage where we love to go of a summer day and sit in cool, deep shadows and read or sing, or talk, or pray to some special saint in our calendar. We call it our cathedral, and it is very old. Before houses were made with hands or ever a man was born of a woman it was there, and unnumbered dead are in its crypt and every age has added something to its grandeur. Gray, tapered columns rise to green arches far above our heads. Dim aisles, carpeted with mosses, green and gray, hush our footsteps so they disturb not the low hymning of the pines. Rugs of linea and robin's wheat invite us, and here and there ferns and branches shake out their incense as our feet touch them. On either side is a great, memorial window when the sun is low, and you would say that between the tree columns there were long, golden panes, all thickly wrought with sprays and branches, to check and soften the glow.

There one day I sat with Gabriel Horton, whose bones now lie in a corner of the garden that he loved, and told him the full story as it is here set down.

"Now where, think you, is my young

master?" I queried, "and why does he not return?"

"Look no more for him," said the old gentleman, with a sigh. "Your ears have not heard a better thing than this: he loved her who was to be your wife and it is chiefly for your sake that he is gone to return no more to you. But when you are gone to your home again I shall see him and learn of his work, and I shall say no more of our dear master."

We rose and walked slowly, thoughtfully down a mossy aisle toward the Hermitage. Thrushes were singing in the lofts of the old cathedral.

My companion added:

"'There is a love greater, even, than that of a man for a woman."

My wife met us and took my arm.

"It must be very wonderful," I said, as I kissed her.

"It is the love of a man for his brothers," said Gabriel Horton. "That, I believe, is the way to love God. This love no longer passes all understanding for it grows, ever, in the heart of the world, and will bear the fruit of peace and brotherhood. I have seen great things, but you shall see greater. God be with you."

Always when we sit in our old cathedral and hear the pines and the thrushes we think of our master and of his great work and love, and in silence we look out through the open door that he has set before us.

THE END

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